1947

Contrails, my war record: a history of world war two as recorded at U. S. Army air force station #139, Thorpe Abbotts, near Diss, county of Norfolk, England

Henry H. Arnold

Contrails

My War Record

A history of World War Two as recorded at U.S. Army Air Force Station #139, Thorpe Abbotts, near Diss, County of Norfolk, England.

With a Foreword by General of the Army

HENRY H. ARNOLD.

One Hundredth Bombardment Group (H)

Four—Twelfth Air Service Group

Four Fifty Sixth Sub-Depot

Eighty-Third Service Group

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Acknowledgements

THIS VOLUME is the final result of more than two years of cooperative effort, both on the base at Thorpe Abbotts and after the great majority of men had returned to the United States.

During the depressing days of the war, the green light for the project was given by Lt. Col. William Utley, Lt. Col. John B. Wallace and Major Horace Varian. Capt. John Schwarz opened the facilities of the Photo Lab, and Lt. William Wallrich aided in the work. Lt. James Shirley became the over-all trouble-shooter for the project. We greatly appreciate their valuable assistance and encouragement.

We wish to thank the men who composed the Contrails staff on the base . . . Harold Jacobson, William Burke, Joe Chretien, Marius Hvarre, John Cameola, Andrew Wisniewski, Wylie and Dale Rosser.

Special mention must be made of the excellent work, both on the base and at home, of Harold Carter, the artist whose caricature-cartoons enliven many pages of this volume. Sending his work cross-country from California, he never missed a deadline and always came through with fine and distinctive work.

We wish also to acknowledge the vital role played in this publication by the many men who upon request, forwarded to us many pages of historical interest. We wish to thank Civilian Ed Stern and Colonels Darr Alkire, George Dauncey, Gale Cleven and John Egan for their interest and cooperation. Valuable assistance was received from John Clinkman, Cy Jones and William Hazelton. Information was also received from Theodore Don, Gordon Sinclair, William Salowe and Jack Hamlin.

We owe debts of gratitude to a group of men larger by far than the group mentioned above. Literally hundreds of former Station #139 personnel and their families aided with bits of history, with photographs and identification of photographs.

The entire project was a truly cooperative effort, and we trust that this volume is worthy of as fine a group of men as ever worked toward a common goal.

The Editors

FOREWORD

"CONTRAILS—MY WAR RECORD" is the written record of what a number of young Americans did to help win World War II.

What does not appear so obviously on the printed page is, perhaps, even more important: the quick, strong indignation of these men, at a powerful menace that threatened their ideals and their American way of living; their day-by-day strength that matched powerful foes and unending hardship; their unflagging courage that mocked incredible danger; their unquenchable faith that met aggressively the ultimate in sacrifice. These things were given freely, as only free men could give. These things definitely assure that free men shall continue to inherit the earth.

Officers and men of the 100th Bombardment Group and of the Service Organizations, I salute you!

H. H. ARNOLD,
General of the Army

HENRY H. ARNOLD

GENERAL OF THE ARMY

COMMANDING U. S. ARMY AIR FORCES

LIEUT. GEN. IRA C. EAKER
Commander—Eighth Air Force

All of us who were with the Eighth Air Force in the early days remember well the June of 1943, when the 100th Bombardment Group came to reinforce the Army Air Forces in England, which at that time was very small indeed. We remember your first mission over Bremen on the 25th of June 1943, and further, the important fact that in less than a year, your Group participated in more than one hundred missions.

This tremendous, courageous and early effort was followed by another one hundred missions in the succeeding year, including your participation in the long shuttle mission to Russia.

The brilliant effort of the 100th Group is fully attested by its total of 312 missions (including food missions), involving 9,642 sorties, 19,830 tons dropped against the enemy and 261 aircraft destroyed and another 240 probably destroyed or damaged, according to my records. The 100th Bombardment Group wears six battle stars, indicating clearly its long and distinguished service in the European Theater of Operations.

This book, to commemorate and memorialize the heroic deeds of your organization in the second World War, will always carry the memory of those deeds.

Ira Eaker

IRA C. EAKER
Lieutenant General, U. S. Army

One of the greatest pleasures that comes with the privilege of command is the opportunity to serve with, and be associated with, the kind of people that made up the 100th Bombardment Group. The 100th's record of bombing accuracy, bomb tonnage dropped and low operational losses made it one of the outstanding groups of the Eighth Air Force. Its low abortive rate is a great tribute to the excellent work done by its maintenance and ground crews and to the service groups connected with it—without whose cooperation the 100th could not have scored its great successes.

The devotion to duty and the splendid performance of their tasks demonstrated by the 100th Bombardment Group and the service groups serving it, not only contributed much to the winning of the war, but to shortening its duration and to the ultimate saving of precious American lives.

In these days of peace, I am confident that all of you will continue to be what you have already proven yourselves to be—the kind of citizens that make our nation great.

J. H. Doolittle

J. H. DOOLITTLE
Lieutenant General, U. S. A.

LIEUT. GEN. JAMES DOOLITTLE
Commander—Eighth Air Force

I salute the former members of the 100th Bombardment Group. Your organization played a prominent part in the development of the Eighth Air Force. By possessing in full measure the qualities of technical skill, devotion to duty, and courage under fire, the personnel of the 100th Bombardment Group, together with its supporting organizations, made a significant contribution to the winning of the war in Europe.

CARL SPAATZ

General, Army Air Foces

GENERAL CARL SPAATZ

Commander— U. S. Strategic Air Forces (Europe)

MAJOR GEN. CURTIS LeMAY

Commander—Third Air Division

I am honored to have the privilege of delivering a message to former members of the 100th Bombardment Group and attached service organizations whose outstanding war records have earned them a permanent place in history, as I can well attest from personal knowledge of their fighting spirit.

World War II demonstrated the importance of air power to the world. Now all countries, including any potential enemies, will devote their primary effort to the development of air power. Therefore, the future of our nation depends upon the immediate availability of the most powerful air weapons in the world.

The only way to obtain these weapons is through a sound research and development program. But research and development can only be obtained through hard work over a long period of time—the end result being measured in terms of the amount of money and brains which the American people choose to place into the project.

CURTIS E. LEMAY

Major General, U. S. Army

MAJOR GEN. E. E. PARTRIDGE

Commander—Third Air Division

BRIG. GEN. HAROLD Q. HUGLIN

Commander—13th Wing

It is a sincere pleasure to inscribe this brief message to all of you whose courageous endeavors and devotion to duty merged to create such an outstanding record.

Over nearly two years of combat against the German Air Force, your resolute determination in carrying the fight to the enemy was a source of inspiration to the entire Eighth Air Force. These attacks could be sustained only because of the tenacity of purpose, the inspired teamwork, and the high quality of individual performance displayed by every member of these groups, and I trust that in this publication you will find a perpetuation of the spirit which drove you on to ultimate victory.

May the pages of this your record of accomplishment, serve as a constant source of personal pride and as an enduring reminder of the traditions which you have established at so great a cost in effort and self-sacrifice.

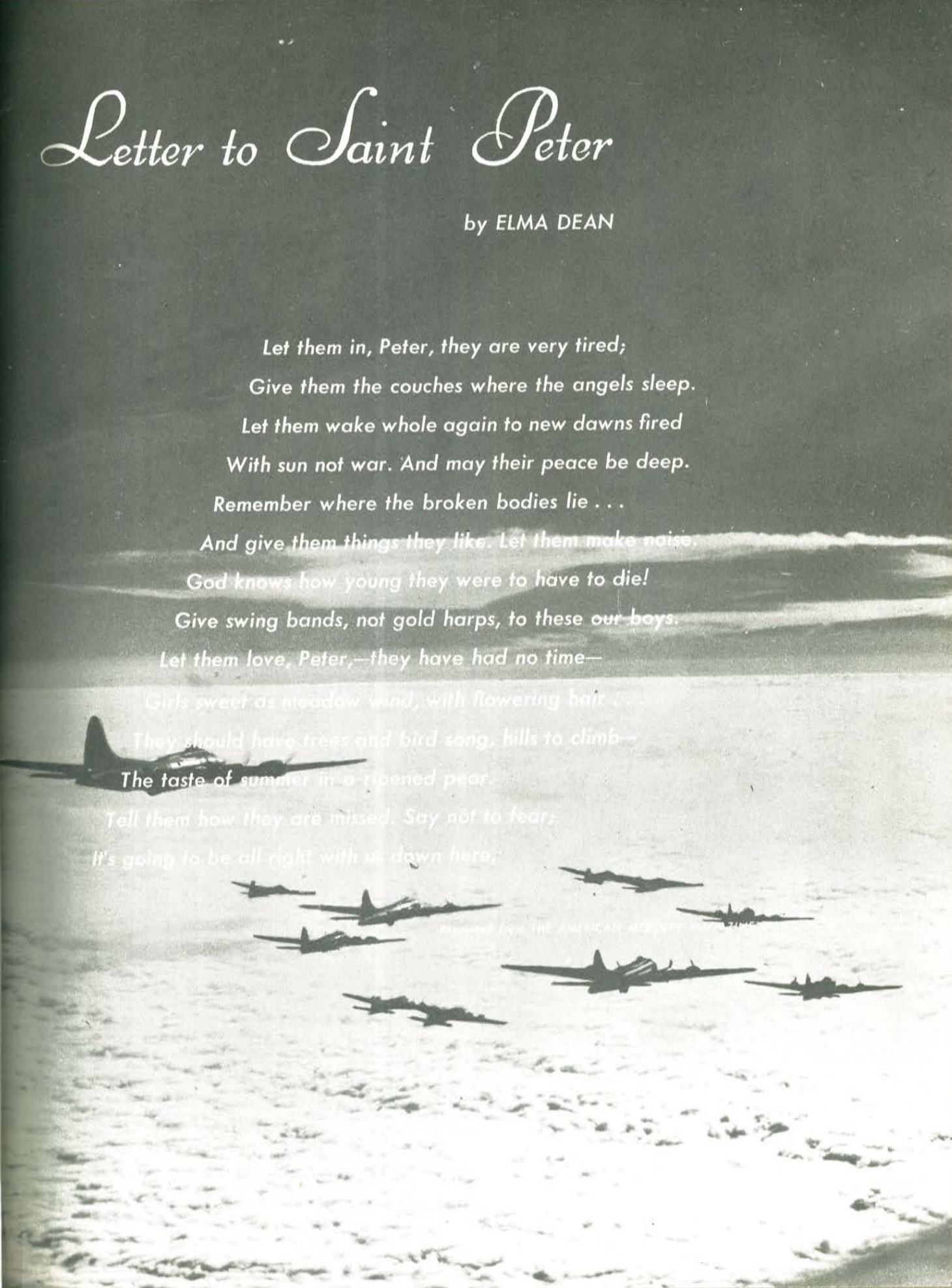
E E Partridge

E. E. PARTRIDGE

Major General, U. S. A.

Letter to Saint Peter

by ELMA DEAN



Let them in, Peter, they are very tired;
Give them the couches where the angels sleep.
Let them wake whole again to new dawns fired
With sun not war. And may their peace be deep.
Remember where the broken bodies lie . . .
And give them things they like. Let them make noise.
God knows how young they were to have to die!
Give swing bands, not gold harps, to these our boys.
Let them love, Peter,—they have had no time—
Girls sweet as meadow wind, with flowering hair . . .
They should have trees and bird song, hills to climb—
The taste of summer in a ripened pear.
Tell them how they are missed. Say not to fear;
It's going to be all right with us down here.

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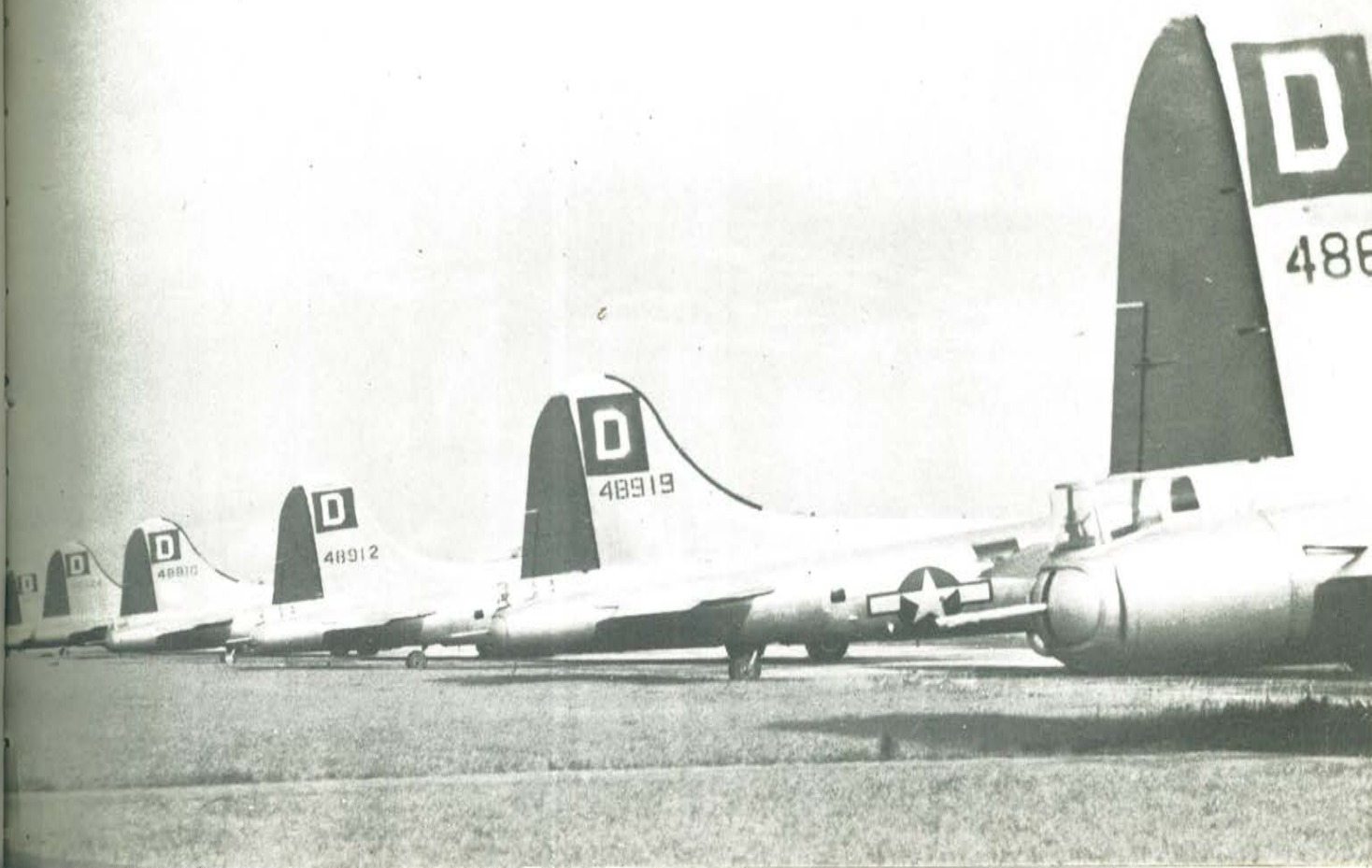
ONE HUNDREDTH BOMBARDMENT GROUP (HEAVY)



GROUP COMMANDING OFFICERS

Col. Frederick J. Sutterlin

Lt. Col. Harry F. Cruver

Col. Robert H. Kelly

Col. Thomas S. Jeffrey Jr.

Lt. Col. John M. Bennett Jr.

Col. Darr H. Alkire

Col. Neil B. Harding

Col. Howard M. Turner

Lt. Col. John B. Wallace

Col. Harold Q. Huglin

GROUP STAFF OFFICERS

Lt. Col. Harold E. Dungan
Ground Executive

Major John C. Egan
Air Executive

Major Horace L. Varian
Ground Executive

Lt. Frederick S. Daiger III
Adjutant

Lt. Col. Robert W. Stivers
Air Executive

Major Karl Standish
Ground Executive

Capt. Henry L. Hollingsworth Jr.
Adjutant

Lt. Col. Robert E. Flesher
Air Executive

Capt. Dale Z. Hobbs
Asst. Adjutant

Major John F. Burket Jr.
Ground Executive

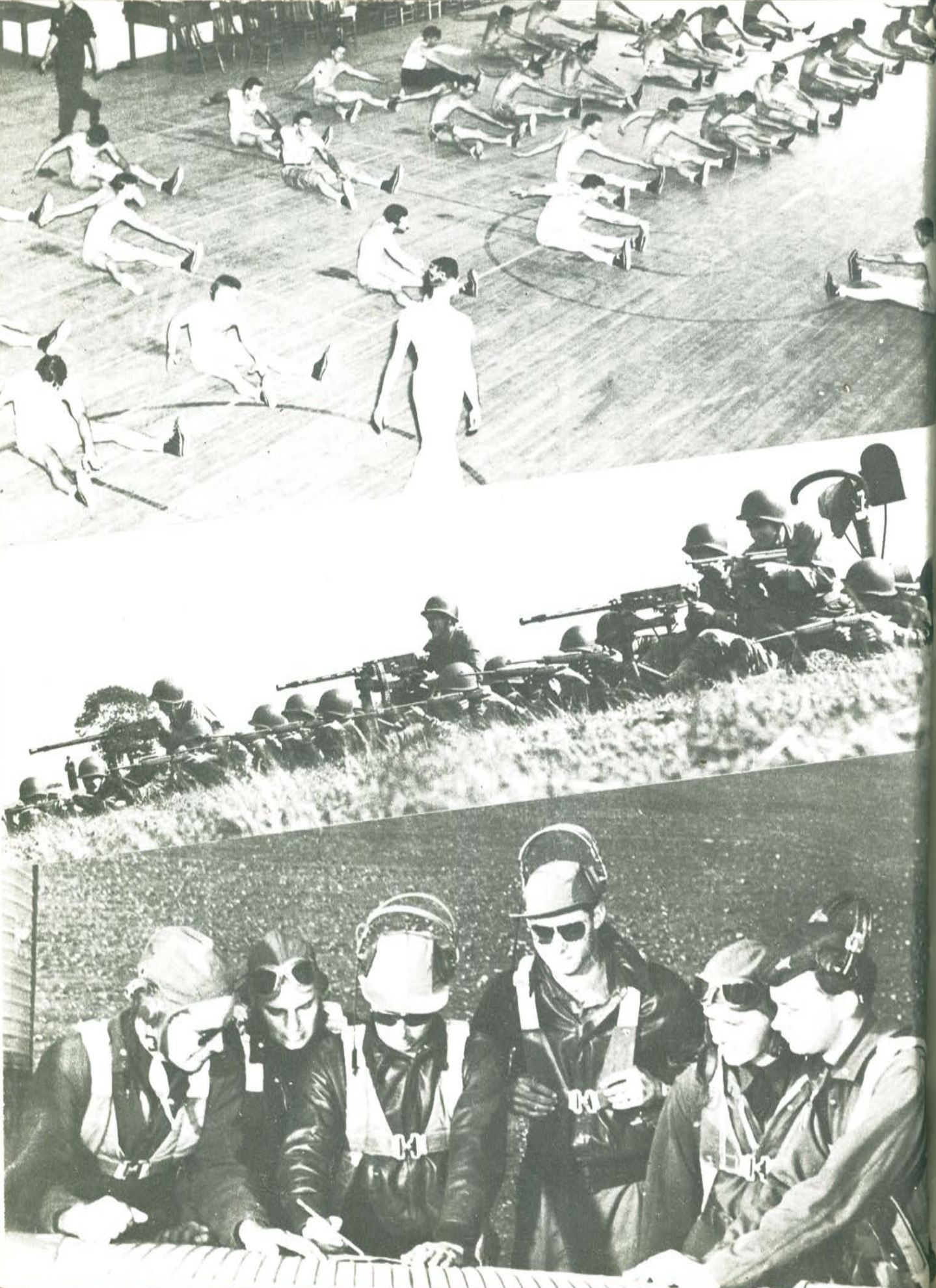
Major Claude L. Hosford
Adjutant

Lt. Col. Frederick E. Price
Air Executive

Lt. Col. William H. Utley
Ground Executive

Lt. Col. George W. Duancey
Ground Executive

Lt. Amos L. Scruggs
Asst. Adjutant



The Beginning

ON OCTOBER 27, 1942, the Japanese sliced through the thick jungles of Guadalcanal, opening a major attack. . . . In New York, the Times headlined the news that the Red Army was still holding in Stalingrad. . . . Presidential aspirant Wendell Willkie spoke to the nation, urging the opening of a second front. . . . A page three cut divulged that Nazi airmen were harassing English villagers. . . . London had two alerts. . . .

One world was held close in the heat of combat, and free men struggled in obscure corners of the universe, beating off the encroaching decay that was Fascism. . . .

There were men who were bored that day. At Gowen Field, Boise, Idaho, the headquarters clerks read their local papers, yawned, and turned out Special Order Number 300. The One Hundredth Bombardment Group (Heavy) came into being.

Years later, when the book of combat was closed, it seemed other-worldly to look back into past groping, forming, training and generation. It was difficult to think of the Hundredth as a number in some higher headquarters notebook, then as a living unit of 230 enlisted men and 24 officers. It was small and inconsequential. So were all things in the beginning.

The men had been transferred from a parent body, the 29th Group. This new cadre had been at Gowen for brief periods, after having been gathered from numerous army schools, training organizations, and in comparatively few cases, from tactical units. By far the majority were civilians in uniform, hardly indoctrinated in the business of war. There were a few veterans of peacetime service to disseminate military wisdom and procedure, though the Hundredth Group soon evolved a way of life which was frequently at variance with old army tradition.

On November 1, 1942, the cadre entrained for Walla Walla, Washington. Capt. Karl Standish had been named Group Adjutant and whipped together this skeleton organization in the absence of an assigned Group Commander. Inevitably, there was considerable confusion as the budding group adjusted itself to its first station.

The Walla Walla Air Base was a first class cantonment, as far as living conditions were concerned, though shop and hangar facilities were almost nonexistent. The base boasted of a good Post Exchange, complete with restaurant and beer hall; an excellent theatre and a base recreation room. The PX restaurant was notable in that it remained open far into the night, and the beer was notable in that it contained hardly a trace of alcohol.

For the first week of its integral existence, the rank and file of the group did little save mark time and make a start on the essential process of becoming a team, rather than a rabble. Capt. Standish's staff, which was to remain intact for some time, consisted of Capt. John C. Egan, Operations Officer; Lt. Ronald W. Braley, his assistant; Lt. Robert D. McLain, Materiel Officer; Lt. Malcolm W. Clouter, Communications Officer; Capt. Lawrence S. Jennings, Flight Surgeon; and Capt. Miner F. Shaw, Intelligence Officer.

The news from North Africa burst into the barracks. There had been a dawn landing at Algiers. Seven hundred ships had taken part, and the news was good. Vichyites were fighting, but many Free French flocked to the Allies. Admiral Darlan surrendered the white-towered city of Algiers as battles went on. Casablanca held, but Americans were making good headway. There was jubilation on the base and consternation in the axis capitals. The landing in the south had caught the Germans with their storm trooper trousers at half-mast.

As the Americans broke across the Tunisian border in one part of the world, other Americans arrived at Walla Walla on the heels of the Hundredth Group cadre's arrival. Drafts of men from other training centers began to swell the ranks of the group two-fold within the first three days of existence. The four bombardment squadrons began to fill out. Commanding the squadrons were Capts. William W. Veal, 349th; Gale W. Cleven, 350th; John B. Kidd, 351st; and Robert E. Flesher, 418th. Each had an Engineering Officer, Adjutant and Supply Officer assigned from the original cadre.

It was not too difficult for the men of the Hundredth to span the three miles and give Walla Walla the once-over. They found a reasonably hospitable, prosperous and quite undistinguished small city, set in a fertile, flat and monotonous region of tilled fields. The town contained the usual complement of resources for soldiers enjoyment; a well-equipped Service Club and an ample number of saloons, purveying only the feeble brew permitted by Washington law. The line of native wines, some of which were highly potent, was delightfully inexpensive.

The attractively decorated bar and lounge of the Marcus Whitman Hotel were favored spots, and there were other rendezvous of varying atmosphere, so that gregarious soldiers had no difficulty finding evening haunts in town to suit their particular tastes. All in all, Walla Walla, the first home of the Hundredth, was not a bad station. The mountains in the distance were beautiful, the work was easy, and life was good.

The worst feature was weather, which was predominantly atrocious. The thermometer rarely dropped below the freezing point, but there was an almost constant raw dampness that penetrated to the marrow. There were days of semi-liquid fogs or icy drizzles. Then, for variety, winds of hurricane velocity would sweep the field on several days and nights, shifting planes at their moorings and wrecking a partly-erected hangar.

Few members of the group were acclimated to such weather, and colds were epidemic. The sound of coughing in the barracks at night was a hacking counterpoint to the outside winds. This discord was soon augmented by a new sound. The first week in November found the group beginning to fulfill a destiny that was to end in victory over the gutted cities of the enemy almost three years later.

The sound of four-engine bombers was heard on the base for the first time. Straight from the Boeing factory at Seattle, four new Flying Fortresses, B-17's of the latest series (F) were delivered and divided among the four squadrons. These were the implements with which the group was to wage combat. These were the implements with which most of the personnel were to become more familiar than with the family car. Now, however, few had ever been near a B-17, much less inside one.

Almost coincidental with the arrival of the first planes, the Hundredth received its original air crews, one to a squadron. The 349th crew was headed by Lt. Oran B. Petrich; the 350th by Lt. Norman H. Scott; the 351st by Lt. Roland T. Knight; and the 418th by Lt. Everett E. Blakely.

Practice flights began immediately. The crews needed this familiarization course, needed to get the feel of their big planes. The pilots and co-pilots had logged some time in B-17's, as had some of the aerial gunners and engineers. The ground crews, most of whom were graduates fresh from technical schools which had given them little practical training on B-17's, approached the monsters in eager ignorance. The airplane mechanics, communications men, armorers, ordnance men, all found that their past, long, school training was but a beginning, a scratch at the surface of the work required. A Calibre .50 Browning machine gun lying on a table in a classroom at Lowry Field is one thing. This new device, shrouded in mystery, aircraft adapters and difficult positions, is another. The men swarmed over the planes, locating positions, straining, grunting, sweating, knocking their heads against every projection within feet, and removing several square feet of skin from the many available knuckles.

It was typical of the character of these men that within a matter of weeks, the freshmen mechanics and armorers and communications men were servicing their battleships of the air with the nonchalance, if not quite the efficiency, of veterans on the line.

Even in this early phase of the group's flying experience, the work of the maintenance crews was competent beyond expectations. The planes flew as often as the weather permitted—which was an average of one day in three—without an accident. In fact, the Hundredth Group's aircraft never had an accident due to mechanical failure during the entire period of training, and it suffered no fatal accident of any nature while in the States. It was a record that was, to understate, unusual.

Though the group had been a going—and flying—concern for a week, it was not until November 14 that it was officially activated, and at the same time acquired a commanding officer, one Col. Darr H. Alkire. The colonel had been a Flying Fortress man ever since the planes had been adopted by the army. He was a forceful individual who quickly won the respect and affection of all enlisted men and most officers of the group. The day after his arrival at the Walla Walla base, he assembled the entire command in the base theatre and let them have both barrels of a colorful and strongly-worded talk by way of self-introduction.

He started off with: "The men of the ground crews are the backbone of this outfit. Without you, the flying prima donnas aren't worth a damn . . ." and went on to tell why.

To the airmen, Col. Alkire spoke with stark realization of the work that lay ahead. "Don't get the

notion that your job is going to be glorious or glamorous. You've got dirty work to do, and you might as well face the facts. You're going to be baby-killers and women-killers, because the enemy started this bombing of cities, and we are going to finish it. We're going to beat them at their own game, and we can't let pity for non-combatants hold us back in this business of destroying the enemy's war potential."

The enemy was at Regensburg, working on lengthy assembly lines. . . . At Schweinfurt, rolling out ball bearings. . . . At Merseburg, working on synthetic oil. . . . In Russia, the siege of Stalingrad was smashed, and the enemy was trapped in the first Nazi disaster of major proportions. . . .

In his opening address, "Pappy" Alkire, as he was soon to be known among the GI personnel, revealed himself to be a pronounced liberal in matters of personal recreation and a champion of the enlisted men—both of which characteristics he demonstrated consistently throughout his six months as Group Commander. The influence of Col. Alkire was largely responsible for the early development of a pride of organization, an esprit de corps, in the Hundredth Group.

As the first month of existence raced to a close, the group had shaped up remarkably. The four air crews were getting in considerable flying time despite the adverse weather, and the ground crews were beginning to handle their tasks with some assurance. The practice missions flown were brief and elementary; no gunnery or bombing was attempted in this phase, though ammunition and practice bombs were loaded to give armament and ordnance men experience.

On November 21, the planes were sent on a somewhat more advanced type of flight, and they carried full loads of ammunition, plus a few live, five-hundred-pound bombs. This mission, on which the planes of the Hundredth joined other groups, which in turn were joined by naval aircraft, was ostensibly a patrol over the Pacific, off the Canadian coast, in search of Japanese submarines. No enemy vessels were sighted, but the gunners of the group managed to test-fire their weapons. Thus far, the war was a snap.

Thanksgiving of 1942 at Walla Walla was celebrated with a splendid feast, and the variety and quality of the delicacies could hardly have been improved upon. Toward the end of the month, the rumour mill, working overtime as it did throughout the war, ground out information as to the location of the group's next base. Those with inside dope were unhappy at the prospect, for they knew it would be Wendover Field, a spot at the edge of the Great Salt Lake Desert on the Utah-Nevada line. Wendover was well known as a desolate, primitive camp, and in the opinion of many men, only the army, with its vast knowledge of the country, could have chosen so barren a place.

The move from Walla Walla to Wendover began on November 27, and the ground echelon of the Hundredth, travelling by one of the slowest troop trains on record, detrained at the new base on the morning of November 30. It had been a journey of nearly three days to cover a distance of about four hundred miles, airline, though a great part of the trip had been spent waiting on sidings.

Wendover Field was found to be as unattractive and uncomfortable as anticipated. Living quarters for the men consisted of long, low, tar-paper shacks, crowded with double-decker bunks and heated by pot-bellied stoves, which consumed vast quantities of soft coal with resulting clouds of sooty smoke and choking fumes. The quarters and shops were continually tracked with clods of white, hygroscopic goo that dried like concrete and clung forever to anything it touched.

The weather, fortunately, was not extremely cold at any time. There was one fairly heavy fall of snow during the stay of the Hundredth, and occasional drizzles of rain, but very few days were bad enough to interfere with the flying schedules. Flying, obviously, was what the group had come to Wendover to do, and fly it did . . . about twenty hours out of each twenty-four. The original air echelon of four airplanes and crews had landed at Wendover ahead of the railway shipment, and new crews were waiting there to join the group. These, with others which arrived during the first week on the new base, brought the Hundredth's air strength up to thirty-six crews, and additional aircraft were delivered throughout the month, until the group was operating twenty planes. It was beginning to look like an outfit.

New men for the ground sections were also awaiting the group when it arrived. These men came from various parent groups and pools; some were from the Hundredth's own parent organization, the 29th Group, at Gowen Field. An ordnance section was acquired for each squadron. These ordnance officers and men, though nominally a separate branch of the army, became members of the Air Forces for all intents and purposes. Throughout the training and the war months, they lived and functioned as much a part of the group as any of the other sections.

The training at Wendover was a rough grind, both in the air and on the ground. Four practice missions were scheduled daily, and each was of more than five hours' average duration, which left less than an hour between flights for the mechanics and armorers to service and re-arm the planes. Most daylight missions covered bombing and gunnery, while the night flights took care of bombing and navigational training. Combat crews, numbering more than the planes available, took turns at flying. In some ways, the facilities for training at Wendover were excellent. In others, they were highly inadequate. There was good flying weather, an excellent airdrome, ample supply of all essentials, and a perfect bombing range on the vast salt flats. Perhaps the most serious lack was that of air-to-air gunnery practice. For some reason, no tow-target shooting was provided during the group's first session at Wendover. The crews fired countless rounds from low altitude at ground targets, which was tantamount to no practice at all as preparation for the sort of battles they were slated to wage in European skies.

From the beginning, the Wendover practice missions were run off in regular combat style, with briefings and interrogations of the crews before and after the missions by the S-2 Intelligence section, which had been augmented by several officers and men. The first mission under this plan was a triangular run, with gunnery and simulated bombing en route, via Shoshone, Idaho and Preston, Utah. Virtually all the Wendover practice missions approximated, in duration and distance covered (about 900 miles), the average of the operations the group was to fly over Europe.

Despite the day and night flying grind, the Hundredth was fortunate in the matter of accidents. On December 23, there were two crash landings due to snow aloft. Not a man was injured. One of the planes was so little damaged, that Capt. Veal, 349th C.O., went to the scene of the emergency landing, a hillside meadow, and made a daring take-off in the stranded aircraft, which he flew back to the base. It was damaged only slightly, the tail surface having been impaled by a fence post in the landing.

The recreational possibilities of Wendover were akin to nil, next to negligible and pretty sad. Luckily, there was plenty of work to perform, so playtime was limited. The village of Wendover proper, which prior to the establishment of the air base had boasted of some 150 population, had now swelled to almost a thousand civilians. They were predominantly male, and feminine society was out of the question for the average GI. There was a small and shabby beer hall and pool room in the village, and an attractive Service Club, built and maintained by the people of Utah and Nevada.

The favored rallying point for the men of the Hundredth was the Stateline Hotel, on the Nevada border and close to half a mile from the camp. Here, the men found a bar dispensing the fruits of the vine, a fairly good restaurant, and a gambling casino. This latter was out of bounds to soldiers, as were the ranks of slot machines in the barroom. The Stateline was an oasis in several respects, including its buxom waitresses who bore up with remarkable patience under the terrific barrage of propositions and uninspired badinage directed at them by the skirt-avid Century Bomb Boys.

Christmas of 1942 descended with a sudden fury of packages and thoughts of home. It was officially marked by sumptuous dinners at the Squadron mess halls. The 349th, in the full spirit of the season, decorated their feast with a great vase of carved ice, in which actual red roses, imported from a Salt Lake City hothouse, were magnificently incongruous in the barren desert, where not even cacti could find sustenance in the salt-encrusted earth.

As the loudspeakers blared "Peace on Earth" themes, armorers loaded five hundred pounders for a coastal patrol. There was a certain spirit of depression present. The familiar home towns at Christmas were missing. It was an empty, vague feeling of isolation. The men were homesick.

On December 28, Capt. Miner Shaw of S-2 left Wendover as head of an advance party, composed of one officer from each squadron. Four days later, on the first day of the new year, 1943, the entire group, less an airborne contingent of approximately 175 men in eighteen planes, set out for the new base . . . Sioux City, Iowa.

The flying party took off the following day and arrived in Sioux City by way of Tucson, Arizona and Pueblo, Colorado. One of the planes was forced down by engine trouble at Las Vegas, Nevada. The crew sat down to await an engine replacement, which Capt. Veal flew in from Sioux City. Armorers and mechanics had slung the bulky, 1300-pound power plant in the bomb bay of a B-17, after the door on one side had been removed. Part of the engine hung below the plane's belly, and the entire thing seemed insecure, but the take-off, the thousand-mile flight and the delivery were made without incident.

The rail travellers occupied four troop trains, the first of which pulled out of Wendover shortly after daylight. Despite the fact that there were a great many big heads among those who had welcomed the new

year in, it was a happy bunch. The men were delighted to leave the desert.

The eyes of the troop trainers failed to register the increasing frost on the windows, and upon arrival at Sioux City, the initial nine degrees below zero blast had a definite sobering effect. It proved to be one of the warmer days. There was glazed ice on the ground, interspersed with patches of snow. On the concrete apron and runways of the airdrome, the ice was a solid two inches thick . . . making a fine, vast skating rink, but a treacherous place for taxiing, landing and taking off.

Living conditions, as well as working facilities, were superior at Sioux City. Barracks were comfortable and not overcrowded. The post afforded all the desired conveniences and minor luxuries. The Post Exchange was first-class, the theatre was good, the Service Club large, and the beer served at the post canteen was incredibly palatable.

Sioux City itself was a soldier's Promised Land. A city of some 100,000 population, the hotels, bars and places of amusement were well up to accommodating the needs of the Hundredth. The people were hospitable, and the city had somehow escaped a war boom with its subsequent congestion and shortages. It was a liberal town, with an almost frontier atmosphere of tolerance and conviviality. The Century Bombers gave it their stamp of approval.

There were plenty of bright lights, and the men were attracted . . . The Glass Hat Bar of the West Hotel . . . The Rathskeller . . . The Oasis, distinguished by Egyptian decor and excellent food. . . .

On the rougher side of the ledger, the Beer Cellar and the Alamo were tailored to the tastes of a goodly number of the men, as was the "811," better known as the "Bucket of Blood." . . . For late suppers, the Savoy was popular, but Charlie's Steak House was the supreme spot for sheer pleasure of the palate. . . . Nobody seemed to lack for dinner companions.

Sioux City also provided a luxurious USO Club, which was well frequented, and even the tipplers dropped in at times for nostalgic mood music from the club's fine record collection.

In brief, the Sioux City Air Base and the town itself were very fine locations for training and recreation, and it remained for one factor to toss a cold monkey wrench into the aerial works . . . the weather.

It seemed that the nearby Missouri River formed a regular pipeline for Arctic cold, straight from the Northern Rockies. There were days on end when the thermometer never rose to zero. There was no night in which it did not fall below the freezing mark. One morning at daybreak, the official thermometer at the base weather station registered 30 degrees below zero.

The training of the group moved ahead. The program for this third, and supposedly final, phase called for three practice missions daily. Stress was put on navigation and formation flying, and included both bombing and air-to-ground gunnery on the ranges in the wilds of the Dakotas. Two missions were daylight trips, the third was flown in darkness . . . when weather permitted. Several days passed during which all the available engine-heating equipment failed to bring the temperature of the power plants up to the starting point. Other missions were scrubbed because of snowstorms. All told, the planes flew but half of the scheduled missions, and the air crews added little to what they had absorbed in the month of intensive training operations at Wendover.

Although the ground crews did not have the volume of work that they had at Wendover, the weather made their tasks arduous. On the open line, the men endured almost polar cold and winds, and there were a good many frozen ears, noses and fingers.

It was a tribute to the sound health of the group, as well as to successful army attempts to protect the men, that aside from frostbite, there was an extremely low rate of illness due to exposure. There was a mild epidemic of mumps, and a serious set of lectures on the V.D. scourge.

By the middle of January 1943, the technical sections of the group had started their painting and packing of crates for the long-awaited overseas shipment. The training was complete. Preparations went busily ahead in anticipation of foreign service. Wives and parents and sweethearts paid farewell visits to their soldiers, and there was an air of subdued excitement among the prospective voyagers. The war seemed much closer, but it turned out to be mere illusion.

Four days after the group arrived at Sioux City, the commanding officer, Dauncey, Standish and Egan knew that the outfit was not slated to head overseas after finishing up at Sioux. General Olds, the patron saint of heavy bombardment, gave the word at this time that the Hundredth was scheduled to be broken up. The news was quite a blow, but Alkire's quick and effective verbiage, plus his high standing in Old's estimation, saved the day and the group.

Upon hearing that Kearney, Nebraska, was to be the outfit's next home, Col. Alkire paid the town a visit in order to break in the good townspeople to the idea of playing host to the army.

In the morning, the expectant Chamber of Commerce big-wigs, the merchants, churchgoers and president of the local college met the Colonel. Arrangements were made for clubs for the men of the Hundredth, and the incidentals of welcoming a bomb group were ironed out.

The president of the local college then rose and asked: "How about my girls?"

Col. Alkire's quick reply was: "You take care of your girls, and I'll take care of my boys."

That broke up the meeting.

On January 21, the men were notified that the overseas movement had been postponed, and that the group was moving to another base, this time as a sort of checking and service outfit for the air echelons of other groups about to set out for the wars.

Col. Alkire assembled the outfit in the theatre and related the entire story, not without personal disappointment in his tone. There were men who felt relieved, there were others who felt let down. At a meeting with his officers, Alkire discussed sundry prospects and problems posed by the new development. To spice what promised to be a dull future, he proposed that all officers of the Hundredth launch a moustache-growing competition during the three months that the group was to stay at Kearney. The gentlemen sporting the poorest lip draperies at the end of that time were to be hosts at a dinner for the hirsutely gifted.

Needless to relate, this contest sprouted some ghastly growths, as well as some hitherto unsuspected talents in whisker culture. The dinner was subsequently held as planned, and the men with scanty, moth-eaten or camouflaged fringes footed the substantial bill.

As the fate of the Hundredth was being decided in January 1943, the fate of the Axis was being decided at Casablanca, where Roosevelt, Churchill and the combined Chiefs of Staff demanded an unconditional surrender. . . . The Nazis near central Stalingrad gave up the struggle, and the force that bombed Wilhelmshaven in the daylight was composed solely of American bombers for the first time. Other air attacks pounded submarine pens, while the Luftwaffe struck back at London. . . .

The men of the Hundredth went back to the packing, which was well along toward completion for an ocean voyage. It was now hastily finished for an overnight journey, and in the late afternoon of January 30, the first unit entrained. Other units followed day by day until the entire group had arrived at Kearney by February 4.

The group's air crews had meanwhile left by rail and plane, to eight different bases scattered over the entire western United States. They went to Blythe, California; Walla Walla, Washington; Boise, Idaho; Pocatello, Idaho; Casper, Wyoming; Pierre and Rapid City, South Dakota; and Ainsworth, Nebraska, there to remain for three months in a state of suspended animation. Theoretically, they were to instruct green crews; actually, they were, for the most part, chiefly concerned with the passage of time and flying just enough to keep from going stale.

At Kearney Air Base, some three miles outside the town, the ground echelon of the Hundredth found plenty to occupy them. Their one-story pine barracks were as the builders had left them, littered with the debris of construction, and the job of cleaning up building and grounds required several days. Double-decker bunks were installed, and two coal stoves per hut were doled out. The barracks were not as primitive as those at Wendover, and were eventually accepted as reasonably comfortable quarters.

Once the camp was cleaned and the men settled in quarters and shops, the Hundredth was called upon to begin its processing duties, which consisted of inventory, inspection of planes and equipment, both personal and operational, of air echelons bound for fighting fronts. Planes were scrupulously checked and crews were given classroom instruction. Armament training was especially needed, as many of the ostensibly qualified gunners proved to be partially unfamiliar with the mechanism and maintenance of their weapons.

Although the Hundredth had no crews in training, the Group's pilot officers, which included Col. Alkire and the squadron commanders, got in some flying time in the few planes available, while the outfits being processed flew a number of practice missions during their stay of two or three weeks on the base. Each transient group completed one long mission from Kearney to the Gulf of Mexico before shoving off overseas. Groups processed by the Hundredth included the 2nd, 95th and 351st, all B-17 outfits.

The weather at Kearney fluctuated between golden spring and rainy winter. At times, it seemed that the wind was shifting the field from Kansas to the Dakotas and back again. For more than twenty-four hours, a seventy-mile-an-hour gale would sweep out of the south, reach the end of its run, turn around and do the whole thing over again. There were intervals of blizzard and snow. As spring advanced, dust storms permeated barrack and shop with the fine powdered earth of the great plains.

Despite the violent changes of weather, there were many warm, sunny, indolent days, and since the work did not demand haste or strenuous effort, the Hundredth enjoyed considerable leisure time. The

theatre was soon completed, and an excellent gymnasium-library opened, where the athletes of the group built an enthusiastic basketball program. Play was practically constant, and the Hundredth produced a crack team which beat several good college fives during the season.

The town of Kearney was of course the first and most important objective of the pleasure-bent Century Bombers. Civilian buses made a route through the base at fairly frequent intervals, and they were invariably jammed to the doors. The bus fare seemed somewhat exorbitant for the length of the ride, and it was generally believed by his customers that the diminutive and voluble character who operated the line was coining more money than the mint.

When the Hundredth arrived to occupy the new air base, the people of the town were totally unfamiliar with soldiers en masse, and at first were not quite decided how to take the invasion. Kearney was a typical, respectable and prosperous trading center for a big agricultural region. There was no color and less excitement in either its setting or spirit. However, after the initial reserve wore off, the citizens proved hospitable to the group . . . a not unnatural development, in view of the fact that men of the outfit spent many thousands of dollars per month in the saloons, restaurants, hotels and shops of Kearney.

Many were the eating and drinking places, but few were the bistros of class or attractive atmosphere. The ubiquitous Oasis, the Windmill and the incredibly-named Arabian Nights were among the most patronized bars. One first-class hotel, the Fort Kearney, and a rambling, shabby hostelry, the Midway, did capacity business day in and day out, while a few broken-down rooming houses catered to the overflow.

One of the most memorable of Kearney's institutions, not excepting the State College . . . were the fantastic Nifty Rooms, which catered to the hopelessly unenterprising.

Another social rendezvous was the Armory, where a weekly dance was held, and the boy-meets-girl business boomed, once the local belles realized that most of the strange boys in brown suits were just farmers and white-collar men and grocery clerks and mechanics away from home and very lonely. At the Service Club, established and maintained by various civic agencies, the Century social lions met and danced with hand-picked misses from town and college.

After some weeks of sampling the diversions of Kearney, a good many of the Hundredth personnel discovered what they came to regard as much greener pastures. These were in Grand Island, an hour away by bus. Here, a great munitions plant employed droves of women and girls, and the town itself was larger than Kearney, though still hardly Parisian in its facilities for revelry.

There was good and bad news in February. The Japanese were finally driven from Guadalcanal. . . . In North Africa, Rommel grabbed his final, brief moment of glory when he drove the Americans from Kasserine Pass . . . which was later recaptured. . . .

Momentous news for the Hundredth broke in mid-February. Furloughs averaging nine days in length (dependent on travel time to the particular home town) were authorized. The first vacationers left February 15, and others followed on their heels, until virtually all members of the group had enjoyed what was to prove a farewell visit home.

Toward the end of March, when belief had solidified in the ranks of the group that it would never go overseas as a unit, word began to circulate that Col. Alkire's assurance at Sioux City was to be fulfilled. On March 30, the first of a series of showdown inspections was held, and the men carefully laid out their worldly GI possessions to be checked.

Two weeks later, the combat crews began to trickle back to the group from their places of hibernation. They were issued new planes and equipment. On April 20, all of the original crews, thirty-seven in number, took off on a mission to Hamilton Field, California, led by Col. Alkire. This trip was designed as a checkout on high altitude, formation flying, but it was hardly a fair test, in view of the fact that pilots and crews had little experience in this type of mission, and were stale from three months of comparative inaction.

The California mission was a great disappointment, and proved unfortunate for the entire group, for it was to cost them their highly esteemed commander, not by a flying accident, but by influencing his removal from command. All but three of the planes completed the mission, which included a flight out over the Pacific, and climbs up to 30,000 feet, much higher than a large majority of the crews had ever flown.

From April 21 to 26, while the mission was away, the soldiering on the base was intensive. There were daily drills and inspections, two showdowns, a

shelter tent-pitching exercise (few of the men had ever seen a pup tent erected) and a formal retreat and parade on the apron. For the first time since the early days at Walla Walla, the group groaned through calisthenics in the morning; that is, those unfortunates who found no escape. There was also a gas drill with clouds of mingled smoke and tear gas released in the open air.

The air echelon returned to Kearney dejected at the showing that had been made. Staff officers assumed the blame, but it was probably less their fault than the fault of the long layoff from training. Group Headquarters learned officially on April 26 that Col. Howard M. Turner, a former Washington staff officer and assistant to Gen. Arnold, had arrived to assume command. The men were informed by Alkire himself, at an assemblage in the gymnasium. It was a typical Alkire speech, in which there was no word-mincing, no excuses.

"I am being kicked out because of alleged incompetence," said the colonel. "It may be that the charge is just, but I am depending on you men to vindicate me in the end. You are going into combat soon, and I have every confidence that your conduct will not only gain great glory for the old Century Group, but will prove I wasn't such a bad leader, after all."

Perhaps there were no actual tears shed by his listeners, but there were many tightened throats among the men he had treated with such consideration and to whom he had been so accessible. There were doubtless many silent resolves to uphold Pappy's faith in the group when the outfit finally hit action. How well such resolves were kept is a matter of record in the combat history of the Hundredth.

The roar of engines greeted May 1, 1943, and the air echelon of forty planes and crews took off for Wendover, where they spent twenty days of advanced training . . . bombing, navigation, formation and gunnery.

Wendover had been vastly improved since December. From the desert, the air trails led to Ogden, Utah, where a week was required for modifications. More practice missions and an inspection by Gen. Johnson, commanding the Second Air Force. Then back to Kearney.

Col. Turner, leading the planes of the 349th and 350th Squadrons, took off from Kearney on May 25. Some planes landed at Syracuse, New York, others at Selfridge Field, Michigan, en route to the Atlantic coast. The other squadrons left the following day, routed via Fort Wayne, Indiana. All planes eventually landed at Bangor, Maine, last stop before the actual start of the overseas hop. Some launched their trans-Atlantic flights from Gander Lake, Newfoundland, and others from Goose Bay, Labrador. Some flew directly across to Prestwick, Scotland, and some landed on Greenland or Iceland along the way. All made the ocean crossing safely, arriving at the group's English base a few days after the ground echelon had established residence.

The non-flying contingent left Kearney for Camp Williams, Wisconsin, for a week of hectic training in warfare a la infantry. The men lived in tents pitched between the oaks and pines. They dug trenches, fired on the range with M-1 carbines and Thompsons, handled explosives and climbed mountains.

On May 9, with quickening tempo, the ground forces sped to Camp Kilmer, New Jersey, the great port of embarkation. For more than two weeks, there were clothing inspections, issues, barracks bag packing and unpacking, roll calls and passes to New Brunswick, Elizabeth, Perth Amboy, New Jersey, and the Empire City, New York. Men returned to camp just often enough to renew their passes and duck out again through the hole in the fence, where the bus line had instituted a regular stop. It was a last fling with a vengeance, and the men sopped up enough bright lights and bourbon to last for some time.

After the air echelon had left the group back at Kearney, Major Karl Standish was in command. Lt. Col. Dauncey, Group Ground Executive, who had joined the group in Nebraska, had flown with the air men to Wendover, and on May 4, headed an advance party to England, accompanied by Majors Egan, first Air Executive, Shaw of S-2 and Lt. Iannaccone, the communications chief.

On the morning of May 26, the earth-bound personnel of the outfit boarded trains at Kilmer, made a miserable, cramped trip to Jersey City, ferried across the Hudson River, and, after hours of waiting in the pier shed, filed aboard the former Cunard White Star Liner "Queen Elizabeth," now His Majesty's Ship.

All through the afternoon of the 26th, that night and the following morning, troops and supplies poured into the vast hull. Close to 1:00 P.M. on May 27, tugs nudged her bulk out into the stream and the Queen pointed her prow for open sea. Few men of the group saw much of the sailing, since they were restricted below decks.

The Century Bombers made up but a fraction of the great vessel's human freight. Designed for not more than 5,000 persons, perhaps 18,000 were jammed into the accommodations. The men did not know what lay in store for them, they were not even positive of their destination, except that it was across

the Atlantic. However, they were aware of one thing. After seven months and a thousand rumors and counter-rumors, they were finally and definitely on their way to war.

Going down to the sea had none of the glamour of a Masefield poem. The sea was placid, new rumors quickly made the rounds, and the converted luxury liner knifed its convoy-less way to a pin-point across the Atlantic. The deck guns boomed out in practice flurries, the men munched crackers between the far-spaced meals, and small white-caps danced from the giant's path. . . .

The ship nosed into the Firth of Clyde and nestled against the Scottish seaport of Grenoch. The sun was climbing over the railroad station as the Hundredth Bombardment Group arrived in the British Isles. Mist-saturated rays licked at the surface of the river and stirred clouds of lazy steam which ascended and descended. The world seemed placid and unhurried . . . like the seagulls gliding and wheeling in their element. The men bustled and grumbled as the harbor slowly awoke to the momentum of a new dawning. Hills rolled softly into the backdrop as a Scotch band on the dock broke into the morning with a rendition of "Take Me Back to New York," an offering notable more for its vigor than precision.

The men shouldered their bulging barracks bags and set foot to land. Before the train drew out of the station, they received their first spot of English tea, the war-time (utility) concoction minus even a hint of sugar. They tasted, grimaced, drank, and were aware that they had been deposited into a rigid war economy.

The train was small in the traditional European style, and was dissected into the usual compartments. It lurched and began the government-sponsored tour through the poppy-filled fields, divided by stone wall and hedge-row. Quiet villages slept by the roadsides, besieged by fields ablaze with the first flowers of spring. The billboards along the way were less numerous than in America, but the brands advertised fell strangely upon American eyes . . . Bile Beans . . . Bovril . . . Are you Chesty? . . . The box cars (goods wagons) in the yards were tiny, and the train itself broke no speed records . . . "Call them box cars? Why, back home we'd give'em to the kids to play with . . ."

The villages grew hazy and disappeared into the night. The train finally pulled into Poddington. The men grabbed their bags and shuffled from the station into the pitch-black. It was their initial impression of a blackout on land. Trucks were waiting, and as they climbed aboard, they could see the searchlights closely scrutinizing the sky and describing broad arcs in the distance. There was an eerie beauty in the display, which was obscured by a stab of realization that this was real and that at any moment the flash of anti-aircraft fire might seek a Nazi invader. The dimmed headlights of the convoy picked out the roads to the base as the men reflected and discussed their first impressions.

Arriving at a new base in darkness is a depressing experience. Shouts in the night, the guarded beams of flashlights . . . unknown paths on an unknown field . . . orders and counter-orders . . .

Col. Dauncey was on hand to welcome the men. His advance party, which had left Wendover on May 4, had arrived at Eighth Air Force Headquarters in London on May 13, to find a confused set-up, in which no one seemed to know where the Hundredth was to settle. The advance party left London the next morning, after experiencing their first bona-fide air raid, complete with sirens and shelters.

They slept through the din and arrived at First Wing Headquarters on May 14, where they received further instructions. The following day the party, consisting of Dauncey, Egan, Shaw and Iannaccone, arrived at Poddington, the first station of the Hundredth Bomb Group in England.

The camp was 80 to 90% completed. The living sites were ready for occupancy, but the technical sites still lacked completion. Runways, taxi strips and hardstandings were in poor condition, and it was estimated that operations from the field by Forts would not last thirty days. Housekeeping equipment was not on hand, and British forms, trucks and telephones were rushed to insure immediate delivery. The leisurely tempo of British method was overcome with the aid of R.A.F. Flight/Lt. Kempner, and were superseded by rush and scurry methods. These were looked upon with a mixture of condescension and awe by our more patient allies.

A three-foot stack of ETO, Eighth Air Force, Third Bomber Command and First Wing directives to assist in the functional activities of the Hundredth was received. A General Advance Party Plan of the duties and functions of the station was published for the immediate guidance of the men, and gave all data necessary to orientate the units in the activities and peculiarities of the Eighth Air Force.

In swift chronological order, a recapitulation of the numerous firsts of the organization shows that Major Egan became the first member of the group to

participate in a combat mission over Europe. The date was May 21, and at 1800 hours, Major Shaw reported him missing. This report, fortunately, was later corrected, as Egan had come through a rough one and landed safely at a station different from the one he had left . . . The Finance Section arrived on May 22, and the next day, a visiting Chaplain held the first religious services on the station . . . The Post Exchange began operations on May 25, and the first keg of bitters was opened shortly thereafter. The effect of slopping down this dark, hop-laden liquid quickly proved to be the same as beer, despite the widespread feeling that the stuff tasted "bloody awful."

Years later, Col. Dauncey was to recall that first evening in June, 1943, after the men had eaten their first hot meal in England, and he gave them "that cock-eyed lecture" on air raids, Piccadilly Commandoes, keep your trap shut, English beer, the eccentricities of a well-dispersed air base, and the pitfalls of loose living. After these words of wisdom and experience, the men were given leave to sleep out the following day.

Sleep was difficult that first night . . . the first night most of the men had ever slept on soil other than that of the United States. They felt an ocean removed from home, and it was a lonely feeling. The trio of straw-filled biscuits which substituted for a mattress provided something less than comfort. There was some twisting, turning . . . then less twisting, less turning . . . then the night closed in on a base at rest.

Most of the men awoke near the crack of dawn to check on some of Uncle George's observations . . .

The group remained at Poddington just long enough to enable the men to receive their indoctrination into the ways and means of life in an English town. Northampton was a long stone's throw away, and contained streets which taxed the ingenuity of GI drivers by their narrow, twisting routes. The market place bore the unvarnished air of age sadly in need of a tonic. The men swallowed their mild and bitters, and the British were continually amazed at the almost infinite capacity of the Yanks. The Yanks, in turn, were continually amazed by the British art of direction-giving. The British, a long-suffering people of eternal optimism, possess a genius for understating distances. A grueling two-mile hike up winding hill and down narrow alley becomes, by some magnificent cerebral imagery . . . "Oh, it's just a few turnings off the first turn to the right . . . You can't miss it . . ."

With the signposts in total darkness, many were the men who attempted entrance into the concrete blockhouses built along the roads for defense against possible Nazi invasion.

From Poddington, the men left for their final destination. The train wheezed into the station, which upon initial examination appeared to be a place called Moy. That was the only sign visible from the station other than Gentlemen, which in Britain, as in America, has but one meaning. The issue was soon clarified and the men informed that Moy was the name of a coal company and that they had arrived in Diss. The wits of the outfit lost no time in taking up the cry of "Dis is Diss!" a classic cliche to which the group clung tenaciously throughout its overseas stay.

Diss was a pin-point on the East Anglian map in the county of Norfolk. From the station, the housetops of the town itself could be seen off in the distance. Men and baggage were loaded into the trucks, which soon covered the five miles of winding road through the fields past Diss, into the sharp curve to Scole, and even smaller and sleepier town, and up the hill running by the Good Pull Inn. Some of the men exclaimed at the sight of an ancient windmill near the road. It was old country, and even the hedges dividing the gold and green fields had been standing watch for centuries.

The trucks arrived at the new home. Thorpe Abbotts was a tiny hamlet tucked away behind the base, unobtrusive except for the fact that it lent an ancient name to modern arms. Sheep and goats looked with wary eyes at the convoys of material, the roar of four-engine bombers touching down at the new base for the first time. The people in the cramped farmhouses dotted along the perimeter, long close to the soil and to poverty, heard and watched the momentous events taking shape before them. Children watched with unconcealed joy and excitement the hectic movements, the gigantic and hitherto unknown shapes that loomed even larger in the fields of their imagination. The Yanks had invaded Thorpe Abbotts with their noise, their planes, their jeeps and their chewing gum.

Thorpe was not as far completed as Poddington had been, and the living sites were not as adequate. Col. Dauncey and Capt. McLain had been on the advance party to Thorpe Abbotts, and did all the arranging the night before the main trains pulled in.

Certain elements had to be split up and others overcrowded in order to keep units together. The equipment was on hand, but time had closed in too quickly, and most of the buildings had not been cleaned or heated. The messing facilities were bad, the chow lines interminably long, and the crowding in-

evitable. The Red Cross had not opened as yet, and none of the recreation sites were completed. Even the mud was thicker. Technical facilities were inadequate, and organizational changes entailing the switch from one wing command to another added to the confusion.

There was sweat and cursing. Even with time off, men found that the thoroughness of the army caste system decreed that neighboring towns were off limits due to the fact that GI's of darker color frequented them.

The 83rd Service Group under Lt. Col. Harold E. Dungan moved in. As spring pushed its way into the second week of June 1943, East Anglia was in bloom, and the men of the Hundredth labored to whip the implements and machinery of the base into combat form. Col. Howard M. Turner, having completed his job of transporting the group, had been replaced by Col. Harold Q. Huglin, who managed to get in a stay of less than three weeks before leaving for Wing on July 1.

As soon as the bombers had touched down, the combat men were launched into their final training. They flew practice missions, achieving that fine edge so necessary to survival in the air. The engineering men coddled their engines and the bombsight boys installed and removed their sights. The ordnance men bent over their bomb loads and the armorers cranked them up and cranked them down again. It was like some Hollywood set taking shape for a spectacle, the only difference being that this set was real and that nobody knew how the final shooting script would read.

The Luftwaffe was still potent during the nights, and the Tannoy (public address system) was kept busy. The first Red Alert passed without aircraft being spotted. Other alerts proved to be of a more exciting nature, and the men on the line could look up and trace the paths of anti-aircraft fire lacing the sky in heated search for intruders. A find was denoted by a sudden bright flame that illuminated the hiding place as the bandit sank to earth.

June passed the mid-way mark and the Hundredth passed its non-operational phase. On the 22nd, aircraft of the group took off on a diversion raid across the North Sea. Although no sortie credit was given for the mission, the raid was nevertheless the group's baptism into the operational column.

On June 25, 1943, the bomb-loading order came through at 0035 hours. Nineteen aircraft were loaded with five hundred pounders. It was a misty night, and the hardstands were enveloped in filmy haze. The crews were shaken out of bed at 0300 hours . . . the crews of Lts. Jack Swartout, Richard King, Donald Oakes, Glenn Dye, Sam Turner, Tom Murphy, Alonzo Adams, Paul Schmalenbach, Sam Barr, Magee Fuller, Glen Van Noy, Roy Claytor, Ronald Hollenbeck, Charles Duncan, Ronald Braley, William DeSanders, Ernest Kiessling, Capt. Mark Carnell and Oran Petrich.

At 0600 hours, the planes took off into the heavy layers of cloud. The route out was lined with nine-tenths alto cumulus and alto stratus, which means heavy sky-stuff no matter how you look at it. Hollenbeck returned unable to find the formation, and Barr turned back after he lost a propeller from his Number Four engine . . .

Major Gale Cleven flew with Carnell as the high squadron lead. Capt. Ollen Turner flew with Dye, and Major Robert Flesher flew the lead ship with Swartout. As the machines droned and ascended, numerous intermittent condensation trails were reported at 25,000 feet. These trails, like pencil marks in white across the sky, marked the presence of aircraft. Gunners were alert and turrets revolved. They knew their lessons, and were fated to put them to the test before this mission was over.

They had been told that the Hun was an opportunist and quick to change his approach if he can get a better shot. They had been told that although attacks could be expected from any and all positions, there were basic maneuvers and that variations were the exception. Small consolation to a green gunner confronted by a sudden variation dreamt up by one of Goering's high-flying "Abbeville Kids."

Ten minutes out of England, an unknown Fortress slipped through a cloud layer and tagged on to the formation. The ship had no top turret, and contained the large white figures, VGY, on the side. The turrets were stowed, and the side windows were closed. The number 23726 was painted on its tail. The mystery aircraft floated along with the Hundredth well into France, then slipped off and was observed to join two other formations. It subsequently rejoined the group over Germany, and kept formation. As the Germans had been known to use captive ships as monitors, speculation concerning the unknown ship was rife.

The formation, ragged due to the closed-in elements, approached the target area. The Hundredth Bombardment Group had begun the fulfillment of its aerial destiny over the Reich.

Flak began to flower outside the windows, and men felt the initial fear of combat. The mystery plane, obviously having completed its mission, nosed up and disappeared into a cloud bank as the formation

reached the target and released their loads into the clouds.

There was a sudden intercom shout of "Bandits at six o'clock!" Action in the air was as swift as a Messerschmitt 109 attacking from below, firing a burst and rolling off to the side before the fire power of the Fort was brought to bear on him.

The ME-109's came on in single file, concentrating on the low squadron. Focke-Wulfe 190's also joined, and a few Junkers 88's were spotted. These were the cream of the Luftwaffe, veterans of Coventry and the African campaign.

Sometimes it takes but one short burst to transform a green gunner into a veteran. There were many such veterans made that day. The enemy joined up in elements of four and came up low from behind, firing from five hundred yards with explosive shells. Petrich, Adams and Schmalenbach, the lead element of the low squadron, were crippled and sank into the overcast. A Focke-Wulfe trailed smoke and disappeared, seemingly out of control. Gunners like Weir and Gallo, Lepper and Berg, Dickerson and Bullard and Bosser pounded away, the acrid smell of gunpowder filling their compartments.

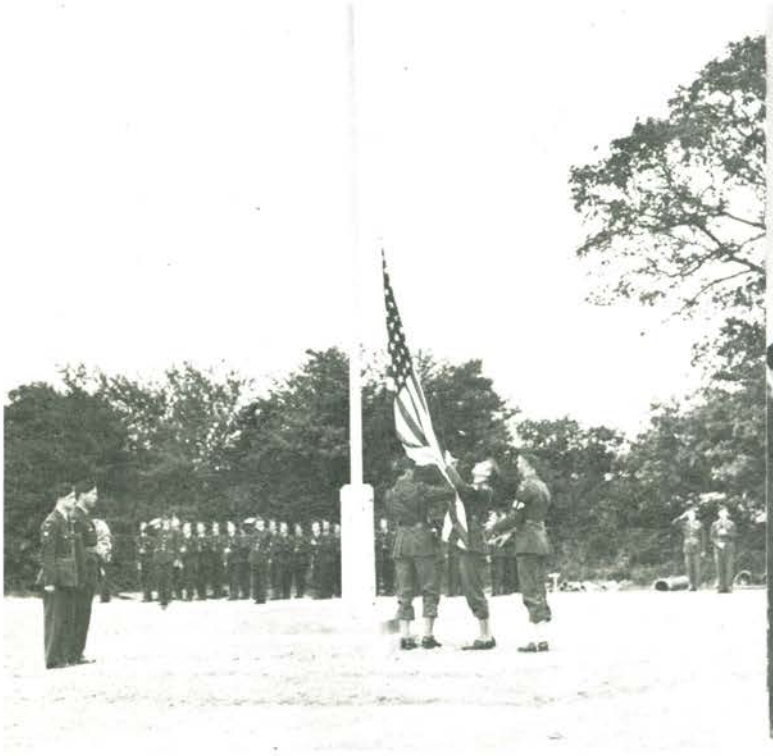
The loose formation fought its way from the target area as enemy planes sat out on the sides but did not attack again.

The first encounter with the enemy had ended, and it was 1124 hours when the group came home. Thirty men and three planes did not wheel into their dispersal points. For the first time, there were empty bunks where men had slept that morning. For the first time, the power of the Luftwaffe, which men of the Hundredth were to help break, had brought the war into the barracks and huts of Thorpe Abbotts.

On July 1, Col. Neil (Chick) Harding, football coach turned air commander, took over the reins of the Hundredth and set its eyes skyward. The group received sortie credit for ten scattered missions during the month, despite the plague of scrub jobs (missions cancelled) and abortions (missions recalled after take-off). These cancellations set the nerves of the airmen on edge and caused the ground men to explode into colorful and choice expletives. The Germans rose to give battle throughout the month, and at the end of July, possessed twenty fighters less. It was satisfactory beginning for a fledging bomb group.

Men stood at attention in front of the curved huts of Headquarters on July 20, 1943. The ceremony was brief. The men in blue, representing the Royal Air Force, officially turned over the base to the United States Army Air Forces. Squadron Leaders Lawson and Blomfield, representing the R.A.F., performed the ritual. Col. Harding acted on behalf of the U.S.A.A.F.

Royal Air Force Station Thorpe Abbotts was now U.S.A.A.F. Station 139. It was now official and a matter of record. The Yanks had taken over.



ARMAMENT

GROUP ARMAMENT

Lt. David S. Currie Jr.
Group Turret Officer

Capt. Russell A. Mitchell
Group Aramament Officer

Lt. Robert E. Scherrer
Group Arm. Maintenance Officer

Sgt. L. Rowton

Sgt. E. Howells

S/Sgt. R. Carr

Even in the days before David pulled a slingshot on Goliath, armament was always one of the deciding factors in waging offensive warfare. As the spear and the sword retreated before the weapons activated with gunpowder, and as wars bred other wars from century to century, destruction became wholesale. With the added element of flight, this destruction became swifter, more scientific and inevitable.

When World War II was ushered in, armament was a major factor from the very outset, as the belligerents vied with one another to perfect the better gun with the greater fire-power. In aerial warfare the United States soon found that the Cal. 50 machine gun consistently proved itself the superior weapon.

A vast training program was inaugurated to train armorers, men who knew their guns and their bomb racks. Other armament men specialized in power-operated gun turrets, and still others in the intricacies of the bombsight.

They learned their deadly work well, these armorers, and one of the myriad bases at which their trade paid off was Thorpe Abbotts, where they grew more proficient with each mission.

The organization behind and around them clicked efficiently. The early days, however, were uncertain, and organization in 1943 was slow. Supply was a constant headache.

Sgt. E. Jones

S/Sgt. T. Keefe

Pfc. C. Wood

Orders for parts were cleared through the Sub-Depot until it proved feasible to set up Group Armament Supply. The aircraft on the base were not completely fitted for combat, and the group was pressed for time, parts and equipment to handle the anticipated battle damage.

Group Armament, under Capt. R. A. Mitchell, grew into a series of connected Nissen huts, housing not only tools of the trade, but also facilities for 3rd Echelon work. Turrets were repaired, bomb-bay equipment checked. Gadgets paid off.

S/Sgt. R. Carr and Cpl. L. Rowton dreamt up an intricate board containing amplidine units and continuity testers that was a great aid in testing the efficiency of intervalometers, while Lt. R. Scherrer's contribution was a mock-up of an entire bombing system for dry training.

Armorers from all squadrons beat a path to the group armament door in their ceaseless quest for gun-cleaning patches, flexible ammo chutes, and bolt studs, their stock having been depleted by the exponents of "midnight requisitioning."

The quartette of M/Sgts. Swank, Hays, Booth and Taylor, the squadron armament chiefs, their officers and Capt. Mitchell met frequently to thrash out points of policy and equipment.

The squadron armorers were never free from mental aggravation, wrought by the constant fear of a mission scrub or a load change. They would always remember the night when the boys loaded 100-pounders and had just completed the job when they were informed that the load had suddenly been changed. Off came the bombs. Back went the ordnance men to unload the trailers and load up 500-pounders. Back went the trailers for another loading. Rabelais himself would have chuckled at the color and choice of language that night.

External racks were another sore point with the boys who worked nights. These Rube Goldbergian contraptions fitted one under each wing. Each subsequently held a 1000-pound bomb, but first had to be coaxed into both manual and electrical performance by men working by flashlight with cold fingers and a wind whipping under the wing.

There was occasional tragedy interspersed with the steady and wearing grind. It was late afternoon and a mission had just returned. The planes came to rest in their dispersal points and the weary gunners emerged. The ball turret gunner on one plane was young and inexperienced. He began to remove his guns, failing to remove the solenoid. The guns ran away in a burst of sharp explosions that reverberated up and down the line. The turret was jerked around by the pounding and the airman attempted to run to safety. There *was* no safety, and he was cut down by the efficient, mechanical killer.

Although there were rare instances of accident, the safety standards adhered to made injuries in armament a negligible factor, and numerous safety records were set.

Modifications came through, orders were issued and complied with. The war knifed its way on, and the men of armament would sit around the Nissen stoves and dream of the days when they could return home . . . and years later, tell their grandchildren about the days they spent grooming the bombsight for precision bombing, checking the turrets for efficient operation and cranking vessels of destruction into the arched bomb bays.

M/Sgt. L. Hays

M/Sgt. E. Swank

M/Sgt. Q. Booth

M/Sgt. T. Taylor

ARMAMENT OFFICERS

Lt. Leo Smith

Capt. Stephen Smith

Capt. Eugene Kraft

Capt. Timothy McMahon

F/O George Classe

Capt. Jack Marsh

Capt. Dale Z. Hobbs

TURRETS

L. to R.: Woodbury, Wood, Norberg, Smith, Arsenault.

Capt. D. S. Currie Jr.

L. to R.: Zulkiewicz, Farley, Payne, Nelson, Walton.

L. to R.: Creitz, Heitzer, Niedemeyer, Steinhauer, Keegan, Pruznick, Weicheck.

L. to R.: Reynolds, Shaver, Lester, Renick, Parker, Wiley.

Lt. J. E. Waller

BOMBSIGHT

L. to R. Front: Cresap, Bowa, Secord, Hayman, Most, Pommer, Potts. Rear: McEwen, LaPlace, Miller, Marsh, Jablonka, Cimokowski, Bruzzone, Thompson. (Not shown: Schollard, Spence, Eltzroth.)

Capt. J. N. Marsh

Lt. R. E. Scherrer

Capt. S. J. Miller

To the uninitiated, a bombsight was a gadget that could do everything but cook a steak. It was a fantastic, mysterious thing. To some people, it was just a job, and a very unexciting one at that. Among these latter specimens could be counted the men who set up their crypt-like bombsight vault within hailing distance of M. P. Headquarters at Station 139.

The boys had moved a long way since T/Sgts. L. Cresap, L. Bowa and E. Most formed the nucleus of the department moving out of Gowan Field, U.S.A. They packed and repacked their bags, installed and removed bombsights, and eventually arrived at Thorpe Abbotts. They were a closely-knit crew and knew every whim and secret of the precision instruments in their charge. In fact, S/Sgt. W. Thompson even managed to catch an error in an official directive which might have cost heavily had it not been changed quickly.

They knew their servo motors and their gyros. They knew their theory. They knew that as a bomb is released and falls to earth, three forces are at work upon it. The bombardier has only seconds before the release line to calculate these forces, and his gadget must pay off.

One force affecting the bomb is the forward motion of the plane. Upon release, the bomb maintains the horizontal speed of the plane, until the second force, gravity, takes over. The third, air resistance, acts to resist the other two forces, and serves to retard the acceleration of the bomb.

The problem posed by dropping a bomb is simply: How far down and how far forward will the bomb be in a certain number of seconds. The bombsight provides the answer.

There are of course other factors involved. There are the winds to reckon with, there is a factor called "trail," which takes into consideration the point that air resistance slows horizontal velocity more than it slows the effect of gravity. There is the vital factor of accurate flying.

To insure perfection, flight on the bomb run must be as precise as possible. Even top-grade pilots have difficulty holding a course within 3° while at the same time maintaining constant air speed and altitude. To insure accurate dropping, an automatic pilot, directly connected to the bombsight, was developed for precise bomb runs.

The bombsight gave to the air forces the accuracy of artillery. It became possible not only to pick out areas marked for destruction, but actually to pick out pin-points in these areas. It has been estimated that the bombsight reduced bombing errors by at least 50%. What this saving meant in lives, time and material is incalculable.

Capt. Marsh and his men of bombsight, like the men of other departments, other bases and other portions of the Allied world, unified by a common cause, drove toward a common goal. With this goal achieved, it was without regret that the lethal gadgets were dusted and put back on the shelf, where the world hopes that they will gather dust into eternity.

SQUADRON

349th

L. to R. Front: Woodbury, Wood, Maus, Fredericks, E. Smith, L. Smith, Booth, Graham, Noel, Arsenault. Center: Adams, Norberg, Oftedahl, Griffin, Palen, F. Harvey, P. Harvey, Evans, Vandelan, Meyers, Nichols, G. Smith. Rear. Kellman, Scott, Olsen, Kaczerowski, Nolte, Essick, Harndan, Johnson, Berry, Hile, Harmon, Willman.

350th

L. to R. Front: Meyers, Verser, Shaver, Lester, McMahon, Hayes, Houghton, Reynolds, Uhring. Center: Trott, Andre, Wiley, Wellburn, Sobek, Able, Parker, Ballasch, Van Beek, Genovese. Rear: Tirey, Beale, Bonucci, Lynch, Dethoff, Renick, Smith, Wallize, Harris, Salmond, C. Smith.

ARMAMENT

351st

L. to R. Front: Herriman, Gelhaus, Bergstrom, E. Swank, Kraft, Classe, Farley, Walton, Nelson, Zulkiewicz. Center: Brown, Fiery, Salowe, Brett, Hanna, Martin, Patterson, Moore, Pallas, Stieler, Payne, Rudolph, Wolinski. Rear: Christopher, Farbstein, Morabito, Lawson, H. Swank, Schmidt, Sambrailo, Pahls, Gorman.

418th

L. to R. Front: Moore, Keegan, Niedemeyer, Dolphi, Sanders, Smith, Taylor, Creitz, Weicheck, Prusak. Center: Haddox, Heitzer, Finch, Barnes, Porter, Nelson, Vercruyssen, Wilson, More, Zebleckas, Wolf. Rear: Carter, Trump, MacKenzie, Cahill, Martin, Castillio, Higgins, Taubitz, Pearson, Schorr, Norgard, Coyne.


GUN
BOX

COMMUNICATIONS

Group Communications

Major Alfred Iannaccone
Group Communications Officer

L. to R. Front: Maj. A. Iannaccone, Capt. M. Clouter, Maintenance; Capt. J. Lash, Training, Lt. M. Juni, W/T-Cryptography. Rear: Lt. J. Houseman, Asst. Training; Lt. A. Caporizzo, Supply; Lt. S. Chapin, PFF; Lt. A. Wang, Radar; Lt. S. Cox, RCM.

Lt. J. E. Miceli

FLYING

Lt. J. E. Pound

CONTROL

Capt. V. R. Biondino

The Communications Department is the nervous system in the body of an air base . . .
Whether the click of coded words in a teletype, the flash of a strike report,
or a tower instruction to a crippled plane,
the dispersed, far-flung units of communications are transmitting their impulses
to be translated into muscular action . . .

Electronic eyes pick out a mass of ground through a solid bank of cloud,
and a pulse communicates back to a mickey operator, enabling him to drop
a load of high explosives through the murk to a target more than five miles beneath him . . .

The men sitting in radio school and the linemen
stringing another wire from an engineering tent
are part of the network . . .

The men in the communications offices and the men issuing supplies
and the men tinkering with Gee-Boxes go to make up the story of Communications
a vital and far-reaching nerve of modern warfare . . .

Administrative Staff. L. to R. Seated: Maj. Iannaccone, Cpl. S. Coen, Cpl. W. Blauer. Standing: T/Sgt. E. Maxwell, Cpl. J. Martin.

Squadron RADIO MAINTENANCE

L. to R. Seated: Hihn, Goodwin, Stango. Standing: Soucise, Zemansky, Harkins, Gryder, LeBrun, Apollo, Evans, Dean.

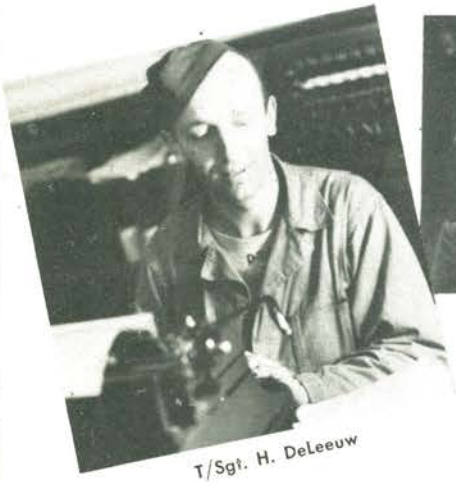
L. to R. Seated: Scott, Pickles, Jackson, O'Brien. Standing: Menefee, Dietzel, Budine, Hall, Donahue, Wolf.

L. to R.: Seated: DiBartolomeo, Rosenberg, Fiorentini. Standing: Milner, Davenport, Wiener, Rondeau, Ballek.

L. to R. Seated: Friedl, Kaufmann, Dungy, Kiffe. Standing: Sweeney, Jones, Wasserman, Maczewski, Reese.

SUPPLY AND MAINTENANCE

L. to R. Seated: M/Sgt. R. Boyle, Capt. M. Clouter, Lt. A. Caporizzo, T/Sgt. H. Deleeuw. Standing: Sgt. L. Eyer, S/Sgt. C. Geisinger, S/Sgt. T. Madel, Pfc. J. Kazell, Cpl. J. Ferris, Sgt. C. Anderson, Sgt. R. Ruyle, Cpl. A. Apuzzo, Cpl. R. Lyons.



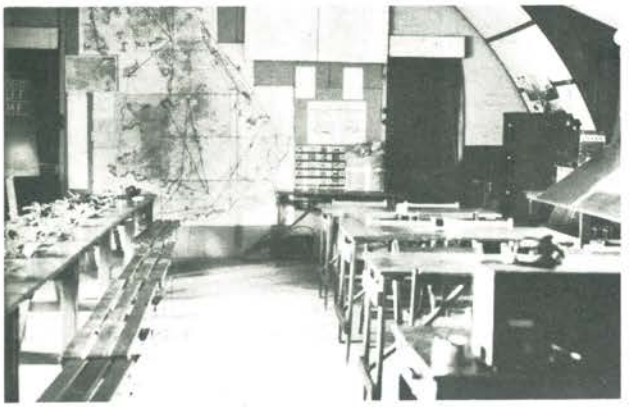
T/Sgt. H. DeLeeuw

L. to R.: Pfc. A. Cordell, T/Sgt. G. Bertig, S/Sgt. D. Cameron.

Sgt. Wayne J. Ketchum

L. to R. Front: S/Sgt. D. Friedl, S/Sgt. G. Brock, S/Sgt. J. Kaufmann, T/Sgt. W. Donnelly, Capt. J. Lash, T/Sgt. R. Garney, S/Sgt. W. Fogle, S/Sgt. R. Mohs, S/Sgt. W. Kiffe. Center: Cpl. L. Hanwalt, S/Sgt. W. Reeves, Cpl. J. Martin, Sgt. R. Jones, Sgt. S. Steinfeld, Sgt. C. Anderson, Sgt. H. Manske, Sgt. I. Wasserman, Sgt. D. Weinke, Sgt. L. Sweeney. Rear: Cpl. F. Melendez, Cpl. O. McGahan, Cpl. S. Maczewski. Cpl. J. Ferris, Cpl. J. Palfrey, Cpl. J. Coen, Cpl. J. Rickey, Cpl. K. Bass.

RADIO OPERATIONS



T/Sgt. John W. Dent
Maintenance Chief

Capt. John G. Lash Training Officer

CONTROL TOWER

L. to R. Front: Sgt. A. Garcia, Sgt. J. Stagliano, Cpl. W. Stierwalt, S/Sgt. H. Ramsey, Sgt. J. O'Brien, Pfc. S. Price, Sgt. F. Dann. Rear: Cpl. D. Wolman, Cpl. W. Foland, Sgt. H. Weese, Sgt. R. Hopfenspirger, S/Sgt. W. Rice Jr., Cpl. F. Russell.

AIRFIELD CONTROL

L. to R. Front: Sgt. M. Mushlin, Sgt. J. Giacomini, Cpl. D. Brancaccio. Rear: Sgt. E. Lindbeck, Sgt. W. Gierke, Cpl. B. Malone, Cpl. T. Swaun, Cpl. G. Shaver.

FLARE PATH

L. to R.: Pfc. A. Garland, Cpl. H. Kokel, Cpl. R. Beavers, Sgt. S. Smythe, Cpl. J. Stolarski.

RADAR

RCM

L. to R. Seated: S/Sgt. J. Miner, Lt. S. Cox, S/Sgt. C. Wolff. Standing: S/Sgt. A. Warnick, Sgt. E. Schwgrz, Cpl. R. Delay, Sgt. M. McKenzie, S/Sgt. W. Fogle.

HFDF

L. to R. Front: Sgt. E. Oblak, Cpl. P. Whitus, LAC S. Mihr (RAF), Pvt. H. Gang, Cpl. D. McFadden. Rear: S/Sgt. C. Bepko, Sgt. D. Weinke.

First Row, L. to R.: S/Sgt. W. Gardner, Cpl. R. Delay, S/Sgt. J. Lacy, S/Sgt. W. Rorie, Cpl. C. Riesche, S/Sgt. W. Kitchen, Sgt. J. Eichert, Sgt. F. Moss, Sgt. L. Golen, S/Sgt. C. Goodman. Second Row, L. to R.: Cpl. W. Fisher, Cpl. E. O'Neil, Sgt. J. Lemberakis, Sgt. P. Santonastaso, S/Sgt. R. Beasley, Cpl. A. L'Abatte, Cpl. J. Harsha, Sgt. G. Bonnett, Cpl. H. Cleary, Cpl. H. Erwin. Third Row, L. to R.: Cpl. F. Duffy, Sgt. A. Mahler, Sgt. J. Leesley, Sgt. C. Maczuga, Cpl. D. Anderson, Cpl. R. Taylor, Sgt. A. Grepling, Sgt. P. Brown, S/Sgt. E. Stephens, Cpl. R. Voeltz. Fourth Row, L. to R.: Sgt. G. Gorman, S/Sgt. S. DeMasi, Sgt. I. Fine, Lt. T. Sutton, Lt. A. Sammon, Capt. B. Levenson, Lt. M. Singer, Sgt. H. Haglund, Cpl. R. Halas, Sgt. K. Martens.

RADAR

L. to R. Seated: Sgt. G. Gorman, Sgt. C. Goodman, S/Sgt. E. Frey, Lt. S. Chapin, T/Sgt. M. Kisselburg, S/Sgt. W. Rorie. Standing: Cpl. W. Kitchen, Cpl. F. Moss, Sgt. S. DeMasi, Cpl. E. Stephens, Sgt. I. Fine, Cpl. J. Leesley.

PFF

L. to R. Seated: S/Sgt. R. Beasley, S/Sgt. P. Swain, Lt. A. Wang, S/Sgt. A. Nelson, Cpl. W. Fisher. Standing: Cpl. H. Erwin, Cpl. H. Gim, Sgt. D. Hermann, Cpl. M. Shapiro, Sgt. E. Mokarry, Sgt. H. Haglund, Sgt. P. Santonastaso.

MESSAGE

Switchboard Operators. L. to R.: Pfc. F. Lewis, Pfc. D. Donofrio, Pfc. W. Gibbs, Sgt. P. Parris, Pfc. E. Hunt, Cpl. J. Dineen, Cpl. W. Anderson, Pfc. G. Hinsley, Cpl. O. Schmidt, Pvt. C. Hoskin, Sgt. H. Manske.

Cpl. B. W. Forrs, Teletype. Cryptographic Staff.

L. to R.: Lt. M. Juni, Sgt. I. B. Waterbury, Sgt. T. M. Morford, Sgt. D. M. Deal,

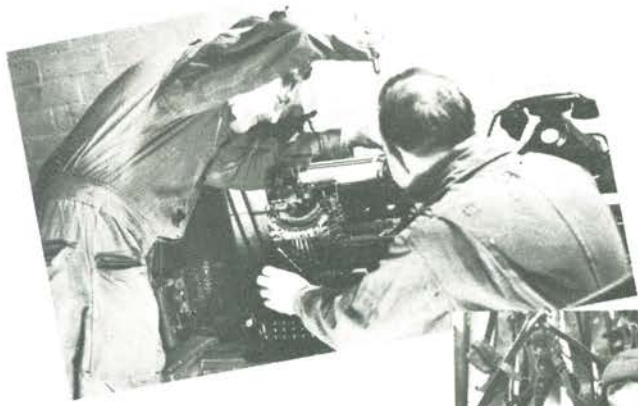
Cpl. C. A. Derleth, Pfc. E. Hunt, Switchboard.

CENTER

Message Center. L. to R.: Sgt. A. Gebelein, Pfc. A. Romeo, Cpl. C. Dekins, Sgt. J. Patricelli, Cpl. H. Watkins, Cpl. F. Melendez, Pfc. W. Smith.

Telephone Linesmen. L. to R.: Cpl. M. J. Humenick, Sgt. L. J. Keehn, Sgt. L. D. Walton, Sgt. R. C. Callahan.

Capt. John C. Williams
Message Center and Landline Officer

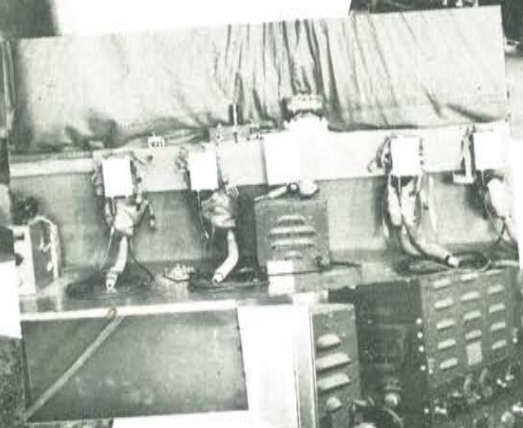
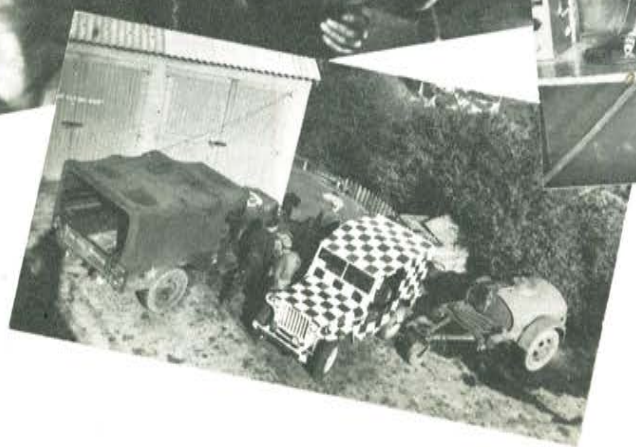


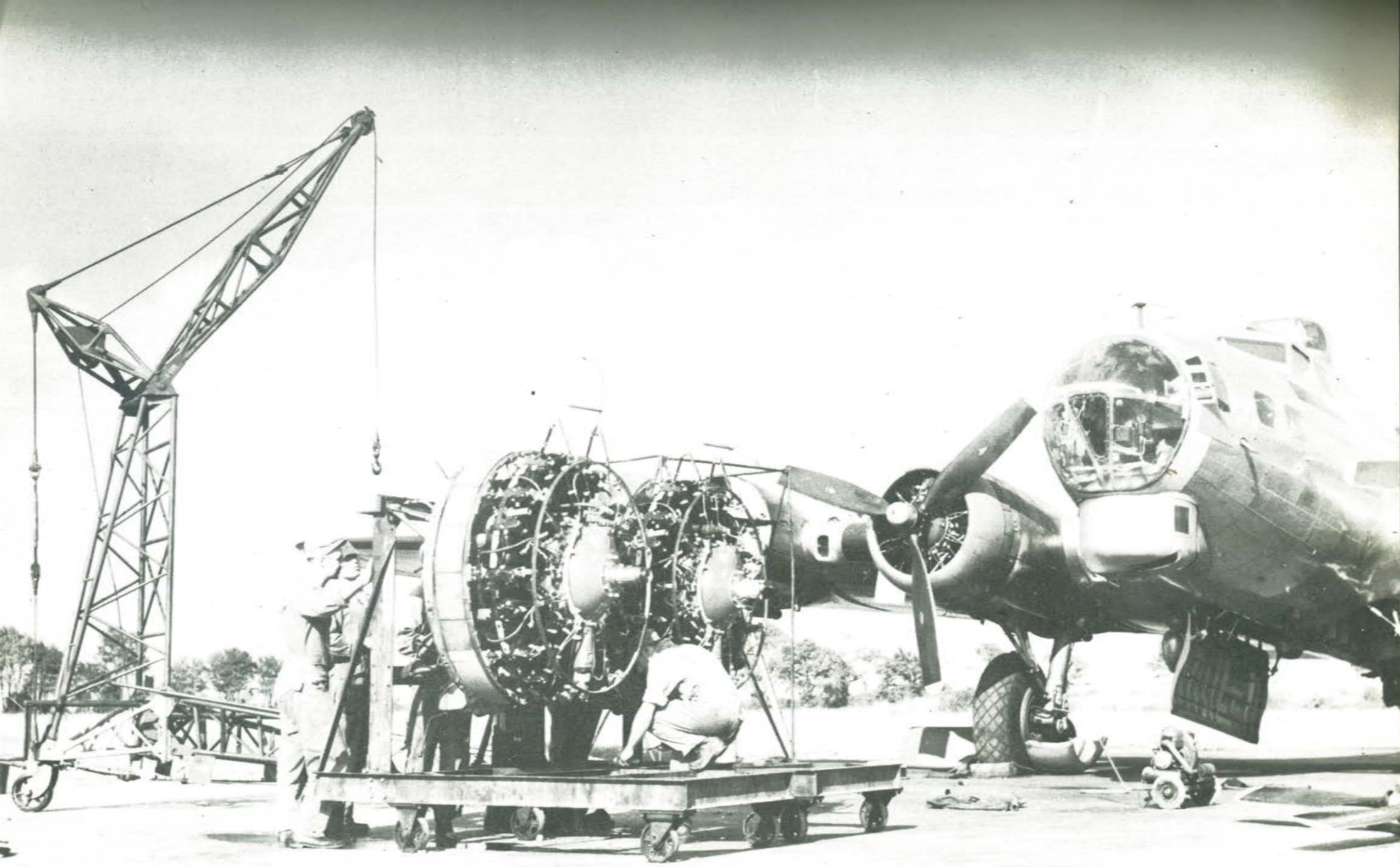








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GROUP

ENGINEERING

★ ★ ★

Major Eugene Rovegno
Group Engineering Officer

Capt. Donald Blazer
350th Engineering

Capt. John Herlihy
349th Engineering

Capt. William Clift
418th Engineering

Capt. William Carleton
351st Engineering

Capt. William Cook
350th Engineering

Capt. Elmer B. Goodwin
349th Engineering

Lt. George Mayberry
350th Engineering

Capt. Stephen Smith
418th Engineering

T/Sgt. Ralph Bragg

S/Sgt. Jack Hamlin

The men on the line, call them airplane mechanics, technicians, engineering personnel or just plain grease monkeys, bore the heavy burden of constant maintenance. The hours were steady, averaging all day and most of the night. From line chief to flight chief to crew chief to assistant, the men knew that the lives of the airmen depended in great part on the mechanical perfection of the work performed on the hardstands. The airmen were not let down. . . .

The work was painstaking, grimy and tiresome. During the East Anglian winters, the added discomforts of outdoor moisture, chill and numb fingers were difficult to overcome, but the engines were changed, new wing panels installed, and at taxi-time, the aircraft were ready to lurch out and head for the runway.

The engineering men took fierce pride in their work. As missions piled up for their ship, they painted small bombs of red or black along the sides of the fuselage, and watched with concern the ever-lengthening battle record.

The early days were the tragic days, when men would watch the ships take off, knowing full well that there would be many empty dispersal points that night. Replacements came slow, which hung like a pall of defeat over the base. Engineering men sloshed through the roadside ditches on the way to work, work that was doubly necessary now that every plane, even those that had returned from a mission with gaping holes and super-charger changes, had to be ready to go again in record time.

With the advent of the wan spring sun and effective long-range fighter escort, the months of darkness began to pay off. American bombers gained the upper hand. The men on the line still worked day and night, this time to service the increasing number of aircraft assigned to each squadron.

To the engineering men, the climax of their work occurred when the "Big-Gas Bird" settled in its dispersal point after a mission, and the pilot emerged with a grin and a wave, signifying that everything had worked like a charm. The glow of accomplishment seemed to compensate for those dreary and sleepless nights.

It was real and it was good, and the airmen dragging their equipment from the plane owed much of their success to these grimy gadgeteers, who immediately began to pre-flight the engines. Another mission was scheduled for morning.

L. to R.: Meyers, Hill, Sokolsky, Muszynski.

L. to R.: R. Clark, A. Defelice, J. Johnson. A/C 919.

L. to R.: A. Sullivan, V. Johnson, J. Steirles. Top: G
Adsit. A/C 452.

L. to R.: J. Fitzgerald, S. Sierminski, L. Holland, D. Damstra. A/C 936.

L. to R.: H. Moit, T. Gregory, E. Farris, I. Clark. A/C 564.

L. to R. Front: J. Chase, J. Pearson, A. Komosinski.
Rear: J. Loudenslager, W. Lawson, J. Bergstrom.
A/C 047.

L. to R.: R. Karicher, J. Saylor, C. Ritter, B. Fields.
A/C 706.

L. to R.: R. McVaigh, A. Boccardi, B. Gotowtt.
A/C 473.

L. to R.: (Uniden.), F. Gollner, A. Lucas.

T/Sgt. W. A. House

L. to R.: Lapore, Boyd, Gustafson, Talleri, Faber, A. McComber. A/C 256.

349th Ground Crew of "Squawkin' Hawk," first 100th A/C to complete fifty missions. L. to R.: Swindell, Richards, Callihan, Herlihy, Bland, Durio, Johnson, Phillips, Bottrell.

L. to R.: R. Bassett, H. Boyle, R. Hanser, O. Hubbard, S. Szalwinski. A/C 810.

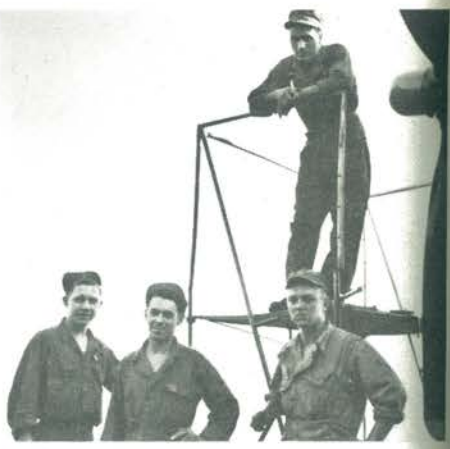
L. to R.: W. Craft, E. Panzke, B. North. Kneeling: R. Stouffer. A/C 815.

L. to R.: K. McCoy, S. Perry, J. Miller, P. Wagner. A/C 824.

L. to R.: W. Biegel, H. Burt, F. Hanson. Kneeling: J. Picard. A/C 412.

L. to R.: J. Zamerski, J. McClendon, P. Conley, H. Wilson. A/C 488.

L. to R.: V. Dolin, N. Lallas, F. Merker. A/C 401.



L. to R.: J. Ayers, R. McClosky, F. Silum. Top: G. Rouvalis. A/C 260.

L. to R.: R. Kuhns, W. Kessler, K. Shoemaker, C. O'Malley. A/C 645.

L. to R.: A. Stiehl, A. Calhoun, E. Hill, H. Cuykendall. Kneeling: A. Simbari. A/C 447.

L. to R. Front: L. Montgomery, K. Lemmons, D. Bergeron. Rear: G. Sumrall, W. Large, D. Schmelzer. A/C 007.

L. to R. Front: Bland, Callihan. Rear: Durio, Phillips. A/C 088.

L. to R.: D. Wesser, J. Fitzgerald, P. Peterson. A/C 784.

L. to R.: L. Griswold, M. Mock, E. Campbell, F. Wachenheim. A/C 150.

L. to R.: G. Tanis, F. McFadden, H. Virgin. A/C 440.

L. to R.: G. Sevy, J. Emmons, C. Love. A/C 667.

L. to R.: S. Miller, F. Kot, P. Rothman. A/C 717.

L. to R. Front: H. Nehrenberg, J. Svendsen. Rear: C. Schmidt, B. Skift, J. Angel.

L. to R. Front: H. Wildrick, N. Davidson. Rear: H. Schluter, S. Nelson, J. Sambrailo. A/C 767.

L. to R. Front: Groenendaal, Roach. Rear: Burns, Piehl.

L. to R.: K. Conklin, J. Clopton, M. Schuster. Kneeling: D. Christopher.

L. to R.: G. Huff, G. Michmershuizen, J. Grant, B. Bitel. A/C 485.

L. to R.: J. Johnson, R. Gray, N. Ruedebush, J. Ruzovich, M. Jackson. A/C 217.

L. to R.: J. Bobowski, T. Gotz, H. Underwood, C. Mahlberg, R. Dogero. A/C 230.

L. to R.: A. Anthony, R. Ansell, E. Panzke, R. O'Keneske. A/C 912.

L. to R.: Capt. Barker, 351st Operations, Capt. W. Carleton, 351st Engineering, M/Sgt. R. Spangler, 351st Line Chief.

L. to R.: G. Kirkpatrick, R. Goodwin, N. Estovich. A/C 209.

L. to R.: J. McCouaghy, M. Walker, H. Klink. A/C 752.

L. to R.: M/Sgt. H. Wildrick, Col. F. Sutterlin, Cpl. J. Sambrailo, Sgt. F. Shelton.

L. to R.: H. Moit, D. Blackly, D. Preston. A/C 552.

Top to Bottom: M. Zwillinger, M. Combs, A. Steveson, R. Druecke. A/C 448.

L. to R.: W. Held, G. Shenosky, J. Stevick, H. Evans A/C 718.

L. to R.: S. Lanzo, W. Stolba, W. Bucklay, H. Walbruch. A/C 705.

L. to R.: C. Small, D. Schmelzer, H. Lind, F. Millay. A/C 712.

L. to R.: V. McGranahan, J. Smith, W. Stolba. A/C 823.

L. to R.: G. Smith, J. Toplansky, J. Napoli, O. Winn. A/C 723.

L. to R.: R. Benham, F. Sligh, T. Butler, T. Lenard. A/C 571.

L. to R.: G. Tanis, C. Apple, J. Newkirk. Kneeling: J. Chrane.

L. to R. Front: E. Fritz, C. Chapman. Rear: J. Carter, E. Seidel, F. Shelton.

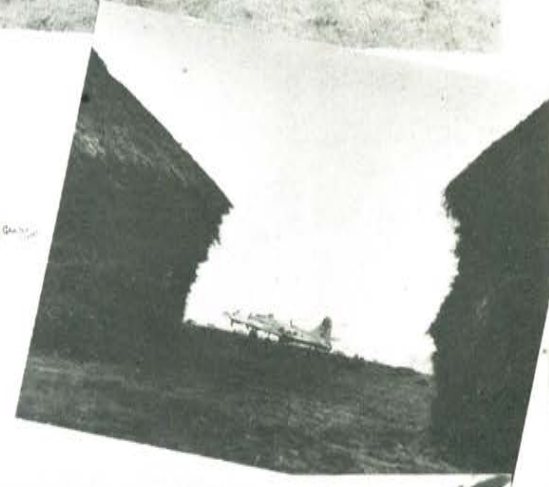
L. to R.: E. Duncan, E. Smith, E. Burgess. Kneeling: C. Johnson.

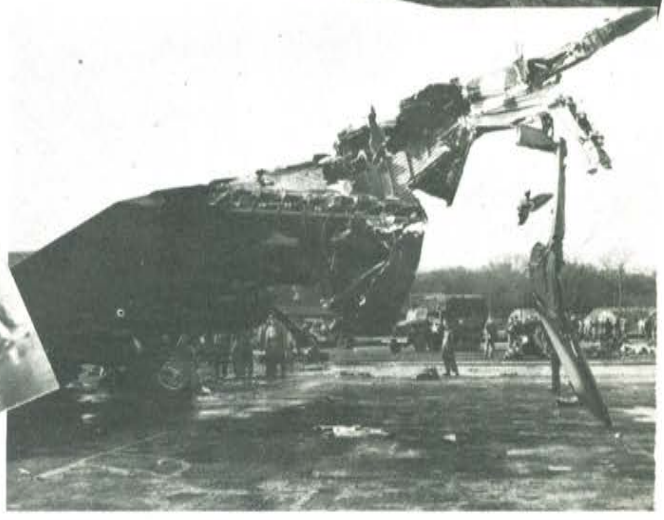
L. to R.: Warfield, Land, Comer, Chance, Mann.

L. to R.: Collins, Marsh, Jack, Nelson.

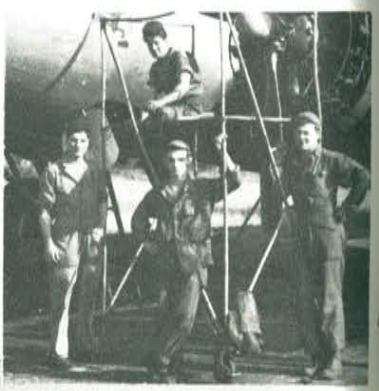
351st Welding and Sheet Metal. L. to R.: O. Dittrick, E. Bowie, R. Forland, P. Deane, S. Haskovitz. Rear: K. Webber, W. Migut, F. Stevens.

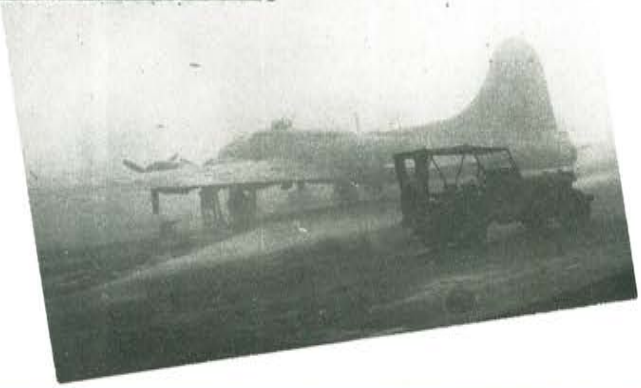
351st Refueling. L. to R.: D. Lingo, J. Oge, W. Wells, C. Schultz, C. Cunningham, W. Watson, C. Dippre, J. Herrera, T. Capuchino.





"Bobo"





Pre-Briefing Council. L. to R.: Lt. Francis King, Maj. Emmett Scharding, Capt. Frank Callinan, Lt. Lyman Sheets, Lt. Leonard Rosenfeld, Capt. Millard Arick, Lt. Charles Nevas, Lt. Jack Bauman, Capt. Charles Terry, Capt. James Bowers, Maj. Minor Shaw, Capt. Henry Hollingsworth, Capt. Sidney Burr.

Maj. Minor Shaw

Maj. Marvin Bowman

Capt. Charles Terry

S-2

INTELLIGENCE

L. to R. Front: Lt. G. Wright, Lt. R. LaMere, Lt. H. Paine, Lt. E. Knapp, Lt. C. Cowing, Capt. P. Mackesey, Capt. M. Arick, Maj. M. Bowman, Capt. E. Johnson, Capt. C. Terry, Capt. J. Bowers, Lt. J. Shirley, Lt. J. Bauman. L. to R. Center: S/Sgt. W. Smith, Sgt. R. Kramer, S/Sgt. C. Turner, S/Sgt. J. Gannon, Cpl. J. Benidicto, T/Sgt. J. Brackeen, S/Sgt. M. Armour, T/Sgt. G. Will, Sgt. P. Clark, Sgt. R. Charlton, Sgt. C. Flang, Sgt. L. Bohen. L. to R. Rear: M/Sgt. C. Kirkpatrick, T/Sgt. R. Hagenbach, Sgt. R. Wyatt, Cpl. L. Delmolino, M/Sgt. N. Gianopolis, Sgt. C. Levy, S/Sgt. J. Smith, Cpl. J. Nilsson, Sgt. T. Horak, S/Sgt. W. Nelson, Cpl. P. DeLeonardo.

FILE ROOM
L. to R.: S/Sgt. C. Turner, T/Sgt. G. Will, Capt. P. Mackesey, Sgt. T. Horak, S/Sgt. J. Gannon, Sgt. C. Flang.

P.F.F. DEPT.
L. to R.: Sgt. P. Clark, Lt. H. Paine, Lt. C. Cowing, Sgt. C. Levy, Sgt. L. Bohen.

FLAK DEPT.
L. to R.: Cpl. L. Delmolino, Lt. G. Wright, Capt. M. Arick, Lt. C. Cowing, T/Sgt. R. Hagenbach.

SECURITY DEPT.
L. to R.: Lt. J. Shirley, Lt. G. Wright, S/Sgt. J. Gannon.

S-2 Intelligence peered mysteriously from beneath its leafy camouflage. This cloak and dagger appearance was belied by the business-like interior. The large Nissen was partitioned into rooms and offices that housed the secrets of aerial warfare. The files contained in these rooms and offices were intricate, some were coded, but all contributed to the vast amount of data pertinent to the mapping out of an offensive thrust against the enemy.

The men of S-2 performed their painstaking work with an ease borne of thorough-going knowledge. This knowledge resulted in a smooth organization that clicked efficiently through the 306 sortie-credit missions of the Hundredth.

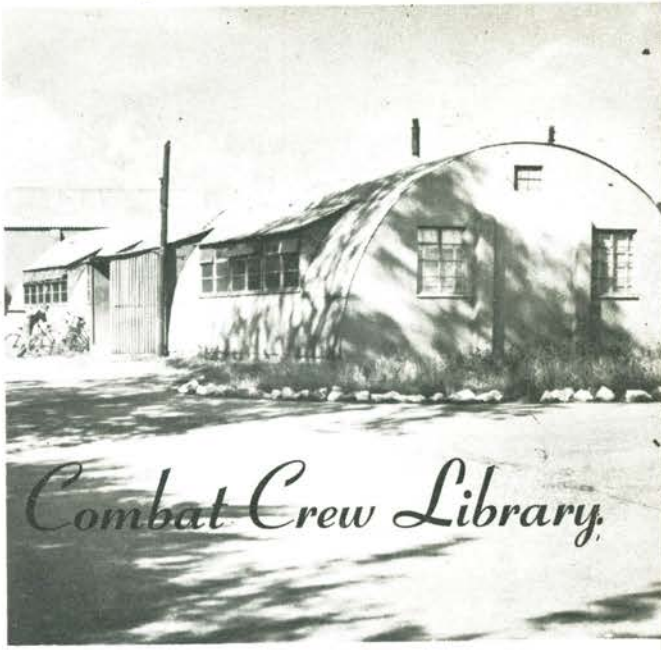
ADMINISTRATION
L. to R. Front: Sgt. Stevenson, M/Sgt. C. Kirkpatrick, T/Sgt. J. Brackeen, Sgt. R. Charlton. L. to R. Rear: Capt. P. Mackesey, S/Sgt. J. Smith, Maj. M. Bowman, Sgt. R. Wyatt, Lt. E. Knapp.

MAP DEPT.
L. to R.: Sgt. L. Dupraz, Sgt. R. Kramer, Capt. E. John, S/Sgt. W. Smith.

L. to R.: Lt. C. Aglietti, Sgt. R. Burridge, M/Sgt. N. Gianopolis, S/Sgt. J. Smith, Lt. H. Tallman, Lt. C. Thelen, Maj. M. Bowman, Sgt. R. Wyatt, Lt. Cipraono, T/Sgt. R. Hagenbach, S/Sgt. C. Turner, Sgt. E. MacCollister.

WAR

ROOM



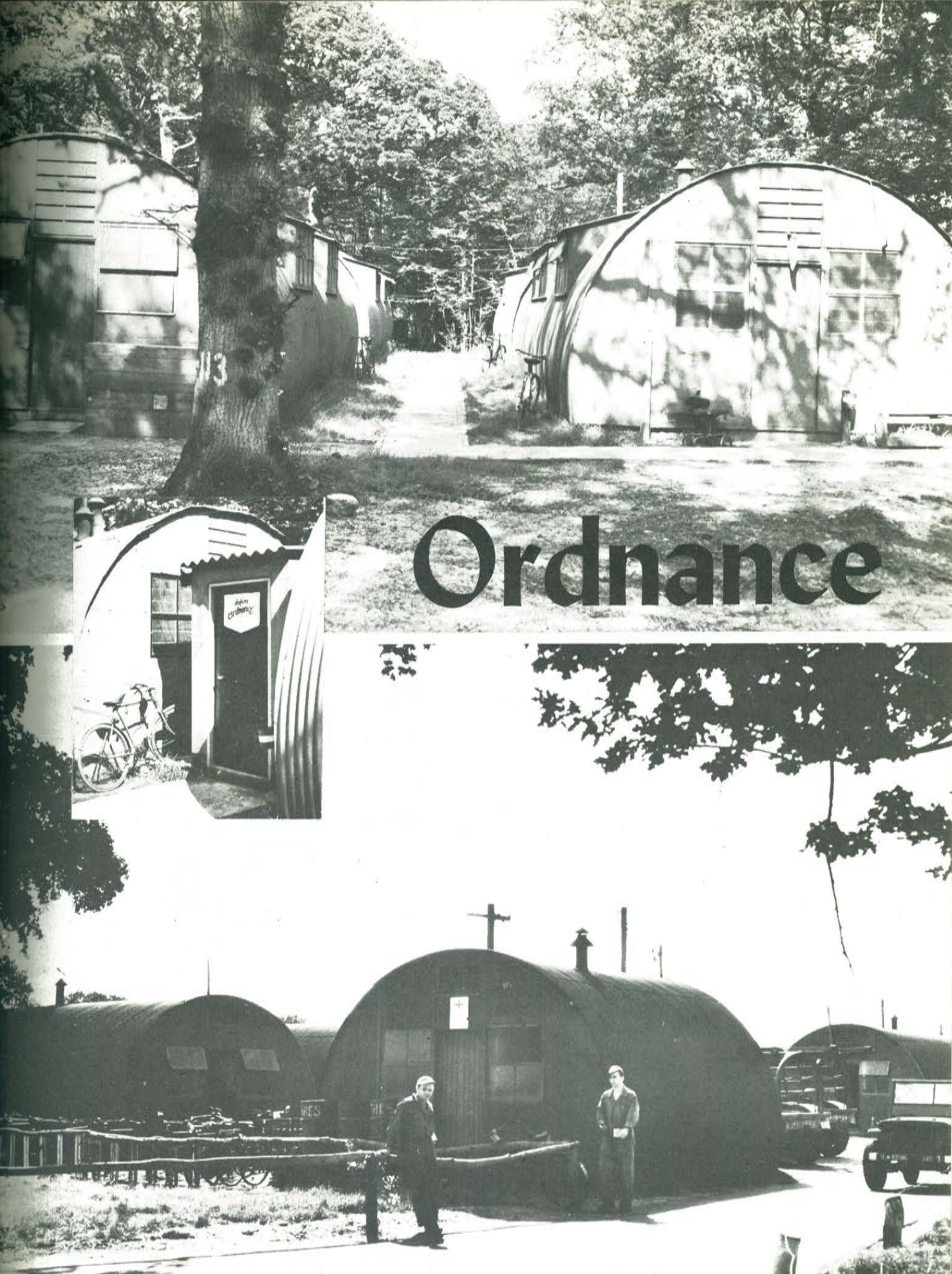
LIBRARY STAFF

L. to R.: Cpl. J. Benidicto, M/Sgt. N. Gianopolis, Capt. M. Arick, Cpl. P. DeLeonardo, S/Sgt. W. Nelson.

L. to R. Foreground: Lt. C. Nevas, M/Sgt. C. Kirkpatrick, Lt. I. Juster.

S/Sgt. H. E. Christensen

Radar Navigator's (Mickey) Briefing



Ordnance

STATION ORDNANCE

Capt. Robert J. Major
Station Ordnance Officer

L. to R. Front: M/Sgt. J. Oberg, Lt. E. Pike, Capt. R. Becker, Lt. F. Orenstein, M/Sgt. T. Smith. L. to R. Rear: Sgt. M. Harris, Cpl. W. Kittay, S/Sgt. R. Rowan, Sgt. C. Eastwood, Sgt. K. Beacom, Cpl. H. Barksdale.

M/Sgt. L. G. Cartwright
Chief Clerk

Lt. W. Harrison
Ammunition

Lt. R. Murphree
C.O. 1776th Ord. Co.

Lt. L. Rosenfeld
Armament & Property

These were the men who supplied and handled the bombs, the ammunition and the fuses, the men who maintained the motor transport vehicles so essential for movement in a widely dispersed air base.

When the base received word that a mission was scheduled for the next morning, Ordnance was one of the first departments alerted. The four squadron ordnance sections were called out to load, while the station Ordnance men set the fuses at the prescribed delay.

The bomb dumps echoed with the noise of truck and trailer, with the grunts of men pushing bombs up the sturdy timber onto the trailers. If the load called for RDX bombs, the men had proportionately more respect for the more powerful explosive, and treated the bombs with additional solicitude.

Bombs used in World War II generally fell into three classes . . . demolition, fragmentation and chemical. Demolition bombs were used against targets that required tremendous blast effect. Fragmentation bombs were used against ground forces and lightly constructed objects, such as trucks or grounded aircraft. Chemical bombs were used mainly as incendiary agents and for smoke effects, although deadly gas bombs were available for counter-use.

One thing is certain. The weapons used by the armies during most of the war are ready for the scrap-pile. It is to be fervently hoped that the new and infinitely more terrible weapons developed along atomic lines will never be employed by the armies and handled by the Ordnance sections of the world.

Lt. A. Stapleton
Ordnance—Automotive

Lt. F. Merritt
Armament & Supply

Lt. R. Bereiter
Ordnance—418th B.S.

Lt. Ernest Irwin
Ordnance—350th B.S.

Lt. Eugene Kraft
Ordnance—351st B.S.

Lt. R. Ruskin
Supply—1776th Ord. C

1776th Ordnance (S & M) Co.

L. to R.: J. Stokes, J. Kwasnick, W. Sadowsky, R. Kegebein, N. Weber, W. Gurski, E. Westfall, A. Christiansen, G. Seibel, M. Scher, T. Stearns, S. Radunzel.

First Sgt. O. S. Davis
1776th Ordnance Co.

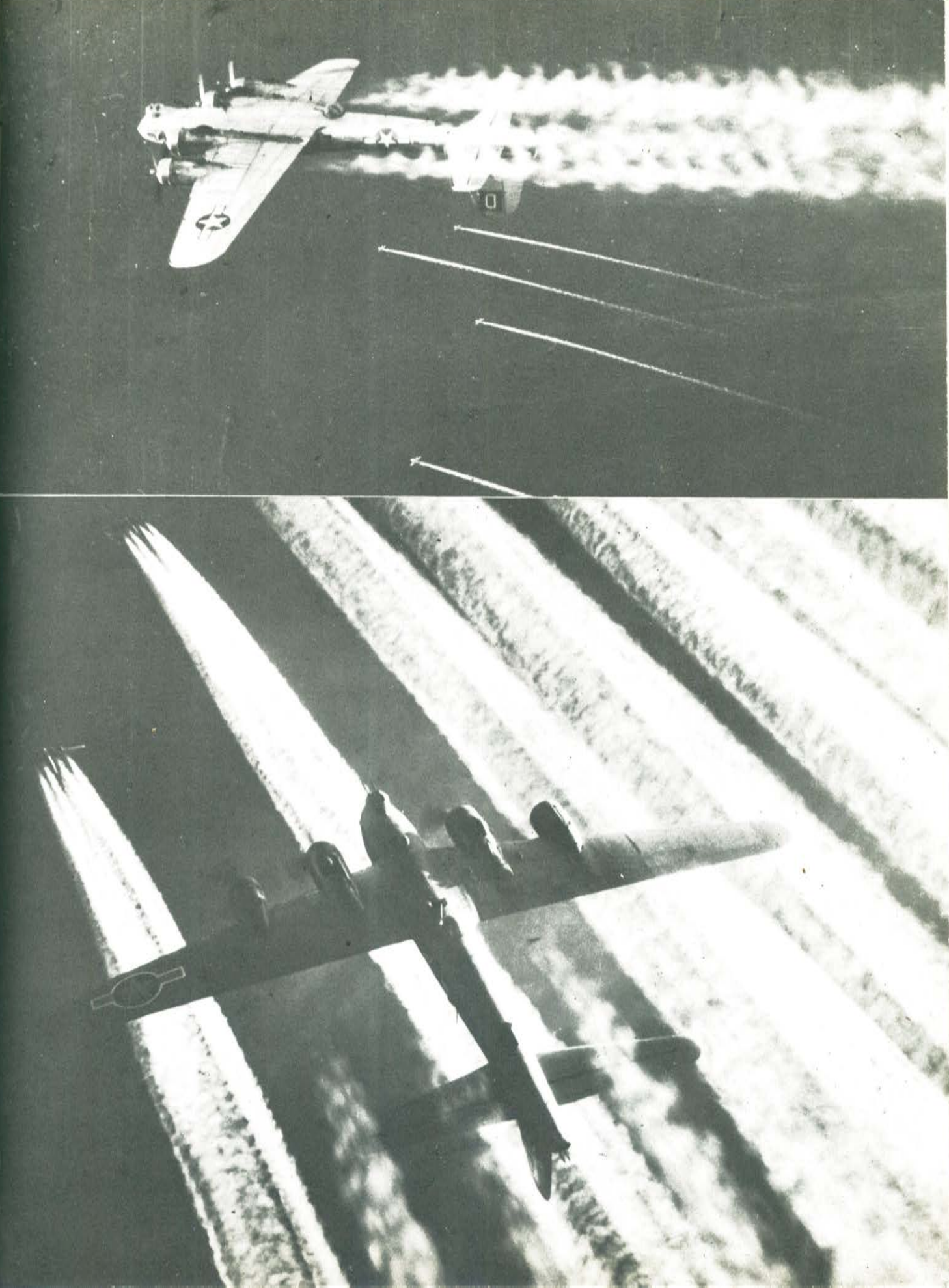
L. to R.: H. Lobpries, A. Tacconelli, A. Petruccello, D. Aiello, W. Price, J. Budka, R. Bruce, C. Gennario, G. Woodruff, H. Sparks, F. McCarty, J. Knight.

L. to R.: R. Bowman, C. Tucker, A. Svonavec, B. Watkins, R. Petrash, J. Monn, R. Burke, M. McCowan, J. Roberts.

L. to R.: T/Sgt. L. Schroeder, Armament Chief. M/Sgt. J. Kwasnick, Maintenance Chief. T/Sgt. C. James, Amunition Chief.

L. to R.: J. Clark, D. Marchese, C. Wright, J. Scarpelli, S. Simon, A. Werner, L. Schroeder.

L. to R.: A. Altman, L. Upin, H. Shoffner, J. Kane, D. Sportsman, H. Rhody, L. Plante, J. Stanich, F. Rossi, E. Evanovich, R. Witman.



Fortress Over Europe

THE fighting in Sicily ended, but the Nazis managed to pull a large section of their army back on the Italian mainland. . . . German civilians began to evacuate Berlin in anticipation of great Allied raids. . . . The Red Army reached the Sea of Azov. . . . Americans and Canadians landed on Kiska, which the Japanese had secretly left by submarine. . . . It was August, 1943. . . .

In August of 1943, the Hundredth went to Regensburg. Years afterward, the mission was still being flown and reflown in the Nissen huts, the air journals and in the minds of those who participated.

Home of the fleet Messerschmitt 109, and the setting for one of the most intensive aerial struggles of the war, Regensburg hid deep in Southern Germany. Even before the planes left the ground, a special sort of tension had gripped the men. The briefing room map had disclosed the preface of things to come, as the lengthy line of flight stretched into Germany, hooked around, and instead of a return to the Thorpe Abbotts base, headed south in an unprecedented flight to North Africa. It was the first shuttle mission to be attempted from England by the Eighth Air Force.

The outside air was oppressive, and clouds hung low over the base on August 17, 1943, as take-off preparations were made. A postponement jarred the men mentally, and they sweated it out for another hour and a half. Finally, Capt. E. E. Blakely and Maj. J. B. Kidd were given the green light, and the lead squadron took off. Of all the groups which formed the bomber stream stretching from their English bases far across Germany, the Hundredth was the last and lowest group, and in that unenviable position could well expect to bear whatever brunt was to be borne this day.

England fell behind. The formations were held tight and above the smoky clouds that fell away over the Channel. The enemy coast swung into view in a series of irregular fields and waterways. The German boot was heavy on Holland's soil, and the arrival of bombers was duly recorded by German radar screens.

It happened ten miles southeast of Antwerp. The Germans came in fast. The Fortress turrets ground in azimuth and elevation, and short bursts stitched through the sky. From that initial moment of near-terror until the assault ceased two hours later, more than two hundred attacks were pressed against the Hundredth. There was desperation in the air as the Luftwaffe piled in and slugged it out. They seemed to anticipate the route, and later, many men confessed that they felt the sharp fear of the formations being caught and trapped. As the aircraft crossed into the Reich proper, the attacks seemed to increase in intensity. The group rocked under the constant pressure of individual fighter attacks from every clock position. It would scarcely have helped had the men known that the struggle was still not anywhere near its peak. Forts and fighters lit the sky with a series of brilliant explosions, and the debris-cluttered air seemed to hold nothing but death and the realization that death was inevitable.

A couple of Jerry twin-engine jobs sat off to the side as though sitting in on a wake, and sent word to their friends further up the road to prepare a hot welcome for the invaders as they drove deeper into the land.

The B-17's shook with the fury of their .50's as the gunners became inured to destruction. Ammunition ran low on many ships, and belts were transported from one position to another. Outside the windows, 'chutes descended in swaying patterns and slow-motion, an odd contrast to the swift and jagged geometric patterns of aircraft parts that plummetted down. It was impossible to keep track of any neat order of events. The entire flight became a kaleidoscopic dream of nightmarish quality, a scene in ugly colors of smoke, fire and the yellow, red and black-nosed enemy etched against the incongruously peaceful blue backdrop of the sky.

The Forts plowed through across the Reich, paying a high price but exacting a higher one from the fruit of the Nazi loom. It was extremely difficult, well-nigh impossible, to estimate in distance, time or place where ships were going down. It seemed that the Hundredth was bearing the brunt of the entire strength of the German Air Force.

Maj. "Buck" Cleven's low squadron was hard

hit. Lt. T. Hummel's ship was seen exploding near Bad Mergerheim . . . Lt. R. Braley left the formation with fire streaking from Number One engine . . . Lt. R. Claytor left the group, sinking rapidly . . . Cleven and Lt. N. Scott continued, flanked by Lt. B. DeMarco and Lt. R. Hollenbeck in a shrunken three ship formation. Hollenbeck's ship had sustained a hit in the bomb bay and had jettisoned the load, but limped in faltering step with the others. Cleven's ship was a flying sieve. Cannon fire had exploded much of the electrical system, wounding T/Sgt. J. Parks, the top turret man. Another 20mm shell got the radio compartment, killing the operator, T/Sgt. N. Smith. The gun installations in the nose were shelled away and Bombardier N. Norman wounded. Hydraulic fluid spouted into the cockpit as the system was smashed, and another projectile severed rudder cables. Number Three engine was knocked out and caught fire.

It did not seem possible that the plane could continue at all, much less reach the target, bomb the plant and keep going toward the Alps, through the Brenner Pass, over the Mediterranean to North Africa. This survey of a seemingly impossible situation did not take into consideration the personal traits and characteristics of Cleven. He had every justification for giving the bail-out signal. The crew prepared to abandon ship. There was nothing else to do, but Cleven did it. As the co-pilot pleaded with him to give the order for the exodus, Cleven countered by blistering a few choice phrases into the intercom. They did the trick; their effect was instantaneous, and the aircraft continued its harried way to the target.

Col. Beirne Lay, flying as observer with Lt. T. Murphy, later recorded his impressions of Regensburg and Cleven in a widely read article.

The situation did not ease. ME 109's swept in armed with rockets. Air-to-air bombing was attempted by Junkers 88's. The lead squadron lost two ships . . . Capt. R. Knox left the formation near Aachen . . . Lt. C. Biddick left near Frankfurt with the cockpit afire. The aircraft disintegrated . . .

In the high squadron, Lt. H. Shotland broke from the formation near Nurnburg with the ship's left wing in flames. The plane was under attack by three fighters that buzzed hungrily about, stinging and thrusting until the weary ship became one huge flame and exploded . . . Lt. D. Oakes drew away with a wounded ship before the aircraft reached the target area. Later, reports were to place him as landing safely in Switzerland . . .

The remaining planes approached the target area. The pressure eased somewhat as the Initial Point was reached. Bandits still patrolled the skies, but their attacks had slackened. Visibility was clear, and the target waited in the sunlight as the planes turned into the bomb run at 17,000 feet.

Bombardier Lt. J. Douglass released, and the group followed suit. The 250-pound incendiaries showered down in fiery profusion upon the primary home of the Nazi single-seater aircraft, and the entire target area lifted in flames. Stately columns of smoke rose from the clustered buildings, and the men of the group watched the destruction with a satisfaction too deep for verbal expression. Later, the Intelligence reports were to state that . . . "Bombing results were excellent . . ." Now, the planes swung wide and headed for the Alps.

The remainder of the journey was uneventful . . . if you call sporadic attacks, some flak, planes ditching, fuel tanks emptying and Lt. G. Van Noy heading for Switzerland with Number Four engine on fire uneventful . . .

However, compared to the tempestuous swathe cut through Germany against the most violent opposition in the history of aerial warfare, these were minor misfortunes and subject to discount. The Division, led by Col. Curtis LeMay, pointed for the Mediterranean.

It was after 1800 hours when the remaining airborne aircraft of the Hundredth circled in the sultry air of Africa and hit the drome, raising clouds of dust and coming to rest in the desert.

Some, like Van Noy, had been forced to ditch into the sea. Some had crashed on the beaches. The planes had been in the air more than eleven hours. Only twelve out of the starting twenty-two landed at the briefed bases. The Luftwaffe had lost forty-nine aircraft to the Hundredth, with eleven probably destroyed and an additional ten damaged.

It had been a momentous day, during which almost thirty percent of German single-engine fighter production had been destroyed. Ninety men were listed as Missing in Action . . .

Others more fortunate slept on the soil of Africa and marveled at their good fortune . . .

Months later, the entire Division received a Presidential Citation:

WAR DEPARTMENT
Washington 25, D. C., 1 May 1944
GENERAL ORDERS)
NO. 36

EXTRACT

XIII BATTLE HONORS. -2. As authorized by Executive Order No. 9396 (Sec 1, Bull. 22, WD, 1943)

superseding Executive Order No. 9075 (Sec. III, Bull. 11, WD, 1942, the following unit is cited by the War Department under the provisions of section IV, Circular 333, War Department, 1943, in the name of the President of the United States as public evidence of deserved honor and distinction:

The 3d Bombardment Division (H) (then the 4th Bombardment Wing (H)) is cited for outstanding performance of duty in action against the enemy on 17 August 1943. This unprecedented attack against one of Germany's most important aircraft factories was the first shuttle mission performed in this theatre of operations and entailed the longest flight over strongly defended enemy territory yet accomplished at that date. For 4½ hours the formation was subjected to persistent, savage assaults by large forces of enemy fighters. During this bitterly contested aerial battle 140 German fighter aircraft were definitely destroyed and many more damaged. Despite desperate attempts by the enemy to scatter the bombers, the group of the 3d Bombardment Division (H) maintained a tight, defensive formation and, coordinating as a perfectly balanced team, fought their way to the assigned target at Regensburg. Though weary after gruelling combat the bombardiers released their bombs accurately on the target and wrought vast destruction on an aircraft factory of vital importance to the enemy's war effort. The high degree of success achieved is directly attributable to the extraordinary heroism, skill, and devotion to duty displayed by the members of this unit. Their actions on this occasion uphold the highest traditions of the Armed Forces of the United States.

By order of the Secretary of War:

G. C. MARSHALL,
Chief of Staff.

OFFICIAL:

ROBERT N. DUNLOP,
Brigadier General,
Acting The Adjutant General.

With Regensburg, the Hundredth scaled the heights of glory, heights which once attained, were held with all the tenacity and purpose of men who had made it their life work to preach the destruction of a way of life with which there could be no compromise. The average American airmen, if indeed, there was any average, was not a politically conscious person. The science of airmanship was paramount, the dialectics of the various ideologies involved were of secondary importance. The issues were clear-cut. It was them or us, and they were the bastards. There was no hint of the boyish face lifted into the sky of an automobile ad, sighing and saying: "This is what I'm fighting for . . . the right to drive my 1947 Super-Eight Podunk . . ."

The issues were at once simpler, yet paradoxically more complex. The men were told what to do, and executed their orders in a more than exemplary manner. Yet, although the preparations and movements involved were almost mechanical, the action usually focused to a point where it became a question of one type of team against another type in the struggle for survival.

There were of course men who were afraid. That covered the great majority. Fear is only dangerous when it acts as a deterrent to action. The actions of the Hundredth were etched deep into the bowels of Hitler Europe, and they were the actions of free men who fought to perpetuate their heritage.

The words of Col. Alkire were brought back to the minds of many men . . .

". . . and I have every confidence that your conduct will not only gain great glory for the old Century Group, but will prove I wasn't such a bad leader, after all . . ."

The men on the ground, backing the aerial efforts with their performances of meticulous and painstaking merit, made up the bulk of manpower in the box-score of war. The greatest enemies to efficiency and morale were discomfort and boredom. When the group reached Thorpe Abbotts, the British NAAFI was in operation, dispensing utility tea and coffee, buns and cakes. The Red Cross soon rose on that spot, and became the off-duty headquarters of the base. Brew was quaffed in the nearby Nissen, and the men lolled on the grass outside the building, partaking in unequal parts of nature and hops. A projector of uncertain temperament held forth in the Red Cross, and a breakdown was inevitable at each climax of the tawdry Hollywood products screened.

Men with supply-issued cycles headed for Harlesden and Diss . . . Brockdish and Dickleburgh . . . Burston and Scole. Those with stamina reached even to Long Stratton, well along the Norwich Road. Those were the evening passes to the neighboring towns . . .

The passes of longer duration were usually spent in the larger towns. Ipswich was on the main route. Cambridge was within striking distance . . . but it was London that ranked as the primary objective.

London . . . the gray ghost of Britain. The towers and ramparts raised over the Thames . . . The penny-

postcard views of Big Ben . . . The Houses of Parliament . . . Westminster Abbey . . . Ten Downing Street . . .

The dusty train pulled through the East End, where buildings strove to retain some shred of dignity amidst poverty and bomb damage. Entire blocks limped past the slow-moving LNER railroad cars, bleeding plaster and the guts of family life. Freshly-shaven men, their forty-eight-hour passes secure in their wallets and on their way to a good time, nevertheless paused in their reflections and shook their heads in a mixture of anger and sympathy. They thought of their homes, safe and intact on Main Street.

Then the train pulled into Liverpool Street and there was the usual shoving, hurry and noise of a big town. A large shipment of fish was being shipped, and the odor permeated the station. Men headed for the Underground . . . Better insure getting that sack for the night . . . The state of the resources decided between the Columbia Club Red Cross hostel for two shillings or the Regent Palace Hotel for a pound per night . . .

The Underground station was jammed, and not only by people waiting for trains. The sides of the station were taken up by metal shelvings, most of which contained human occupants. It was a shock to realize that men, women and children slept here, safe in these caves from German bombs. A civilization moved underground, and the voices of children mingled with the roar of incoming trains.

London is huge, and the interests of the men were varied. Some headed for Cricklewood, others for Hackney, more for Chelsea, London's Greenwich Village. Soho, the French section, drew some. Many of the men had dates.

Soldiers in a foreign land, removed from all external moral forces which worked upon them in their home communities, tended to meet only the fringe of a people . . . the shopkeepers, the bar element, the looser types. Those with enough insight to seek more gratifying circles were rewarded by many deep-seated friendships and a wealth of common interests.

With the bombing of Queens Hall, the center of London's musical interest shifted to Albert Hall, where the London Philharmonic and BBC Orchestras vied for the attention of the concert-goers. Throughout the war, the National Galleries, many of their walls stripped of art treasures, played host to large audiences for one shilling, one-hour afternoon concerts. The war fostered a renaissance of the English arts, as CEMA (The Council for the Encouragement of Music and Arts) spread its work to all corners of the British Isles.

Rainbow Corner was the Red Cross Mecca, the eating and lounging center of the spider-web of clubs throughout London. There were tours, game rooms, theatre tickets for the asking, an information bureau and all of the numerous services required by the men. The club, like all others, was open all night.

Around the corner from the Rainbow, the Windmill (We Never Closed) Theatre prominently displayed the generous lines of the femmes principales, and avid GI's crowded into the queues to take advantage of the O.D.-cut price. Other legitimate playhouses were at their stands at Leicester Square and along Shaftesbury Avenue. The cinemas, strewn about Piccadilly were crowded. The English, a patient people, had long since resigned themselves to standing in queues for everything from food to newspapers.

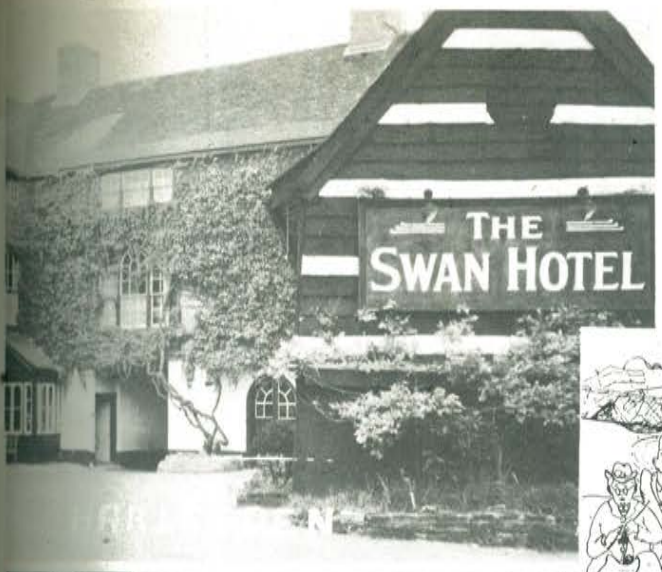
As the night closed in, activity grew more intense from Victoria to Marble Arch to Piccadilly. The gentle strains of "Roll Me Over in the Clover" wafted down innumerable streets, and footsteps were sharp in the pitch darkness of effective blackout.

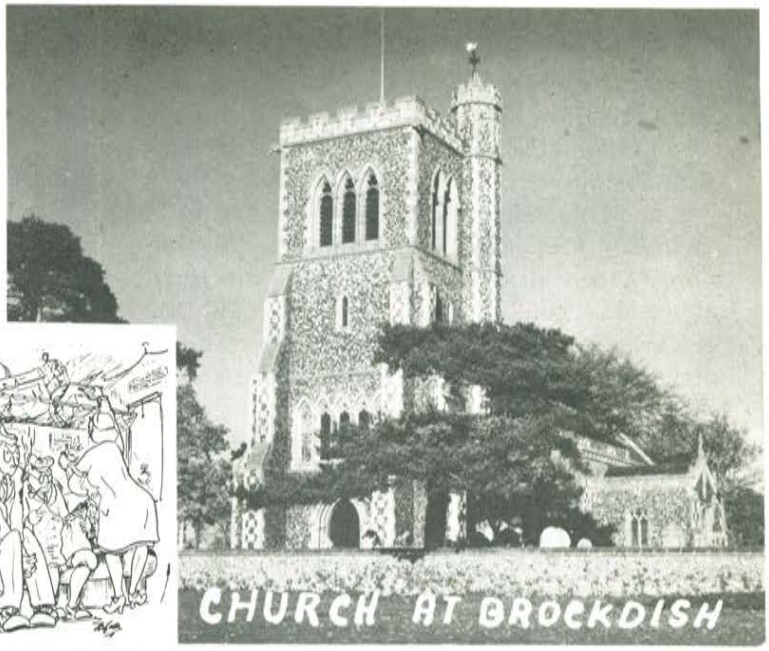
The pubs closed early in London. Then the voices began to paw from doorways, soft promises to be fulfilled at a price. The economic impact of much loose money in the hands of visitors from other shores, plus a low wage scale, has always caused a sharp decrease in the morals of any society. War-time England was no exception. The tension of everyday life, the unbearable drudgery of a pound per week position, the unbelievable flow of money to be had almost for the asking; all these factors combined to tempt, and one look at Piccadilly Circus after dark proved that much of the temptation had not been successfully resisted.

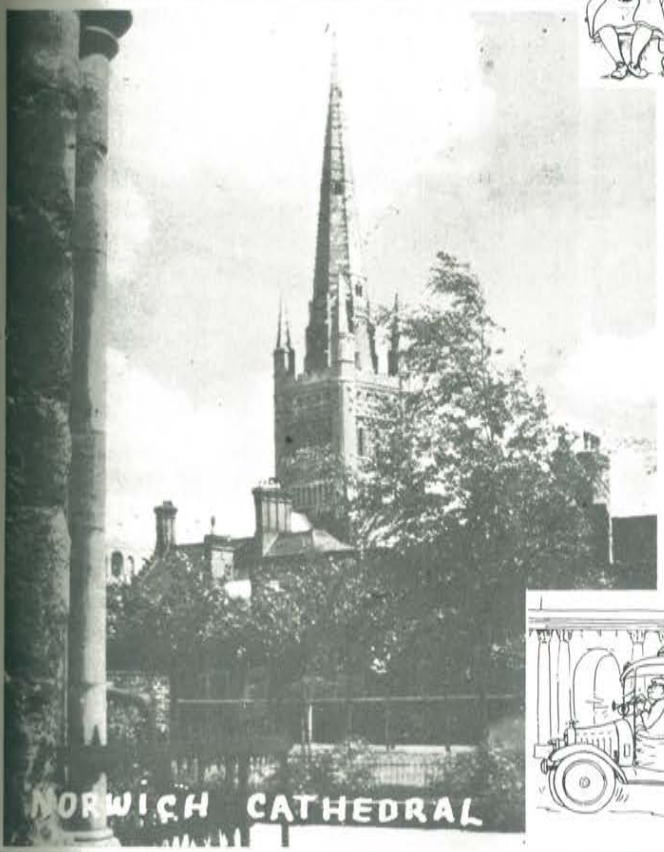
The end of a pass was cause for gloom, but it was still pleasant to get back and dig into a heaping plate of GI chow. After sampling the war-time London rations, no one was likely to quibble.

As the days wore into September 1943, more missions were racked up, crews drew their flak leaves (usually a week of rest to recover from battle fatigue) and more men headed for the Big Town after the rigours of Stuttgart. The soft mattresses of the Strand Palace . . . the Winston . . . the Cumberland . . . were the closest things to the rest of angels after the sharp fear of death and fire in the sky. Men met their buddies and told of the ill-fated practice mission of September 24, when Jerry fighters surprised the Hundredth over the North Sea.

On the morning of September 24, the combat men were alerted for a trip to Stuttgart. Adverse weather cancelled the mission and the men retired to their sacks. It was almost noon when they were re-

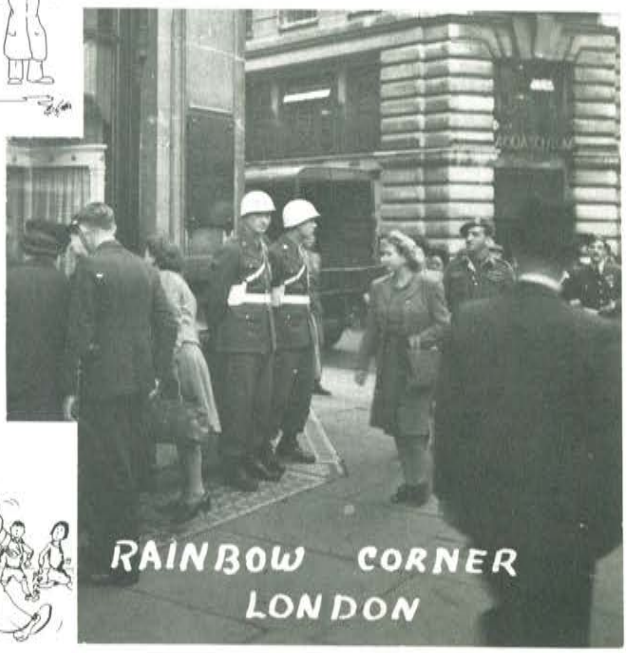



CHURCH AT BROCKDISH


NORWICH CATHEDRAL


BASE PERSONNEL
IN DISS CHOIR


PICCADILLY
CIRCUS, LONDON


RAINBOW CORNER
LONDON

called and quickly briefed for a hurried practice mission. The entire Third Division had been called out for this effort, the purpose of which was to experiment with Pathfinder bombing.

Lt. J. Gossage and his crew, having racked up their first mission the day before, headed for their ship, "Laden Maiden," and found it still laden with 500-pound bombs. The unloading would not have given the crew an opportunity to take off in time, so dispatchers immediately assigned the men to another ship, A/C 259, or "Damdifino II."

There was no time to check any but the things of primary importance. Ten machine guns lay in the nose compartment. Many of the ships carried skeleton crews, but Gossage had a complete crew.

Maj. R. Flesher and Capt. S. Barr led the high squadron, and Gossage flew the Number Two position. Assembly and climb was routine.

"Before too much time had elapsed," Bombardier Theodore J. Don later recalled, "our navigator, J. Dalton, told me that we were nearing the 'Target Area,' so I prepared for bombing. Overcast was 10/10 beneath us. I waited for ages but received no signal for 'prepare to bomb' and began to wonder how far we had to go.

"We were supposed to rendezvous with our friendly escort, P-47's, near the Wash, so that when about ten to fifteen dots were spotted heading toward six o'clock over to our left, we naturally thought they were our fighters.

"We were rudely disappointed. The top turret of Barr's ship began to sputter and our crew was alerted. Alshouse in the tail said 'Fighters!' and took a few shots, but they were still too far away. They circled and came up our right. I unlimbered my right nose gun.

"The attack was fast and invisible . . . they came out of the sun at one o'clock. Our fuselage from the bomb-bay back was ripped to shreds. Then a 20mm landed directly behind Number Three engine. The oil tank was hit and flared up furiously. We didn't see it at first and kept flying tight to Barr, who waved us away. We stuck to him like a leech. He kept waving frantically.

"Then we discovered the fire, banked away and lost altitude. Gossage intended to ditch but the wing was burning so badly, he thought the gas tanks would give way and gave the order to bail out. We opened the bomb-bay doors and hit the silk one by one. When I went, we must not have been more than one thousand feet up. I hit water almost as I yanked the ripcord.

"I was in H_2O about an hour when I saw boats. I marveled at the speed of 'Air-Sea Rescue' and hollered my head off as two of them passed on either side. They didn't hear and I thought I was lost. Then one came down the middle lane and picked me up. What a relief! Alshouse and Radio Man Gillen were on the boat with me. The other boats picked up Gossage and Engineer Humphrey.

"Co-Pilot Grier and Navigator Dalton were dead when they were picked up. We stayed for hours but could find no trace of Lovell, the left waist man, R. Schulte, right waist and ball turret man DeCooman. . . .

"The boats turned out to be torpedo boats, English and one Polish, out on a sortie to the Dutch coast. We were about 35 miles from the English coast and 20 miles from the Dutch coast. That night, we chased German 'E' boats all over the water. Commander Bradford, leading the flotilla, will long be remembered in my thoughts.

"Gossage was the last and only one in the ship. He wanted to skim the water and make a splash which might put the fire out. It didn't work and he hit the water nose down. Somehow, he crawled through the side window, although his foot had been wedged in by the rudder pedals. When he came up from about fifteen feet of water, the sea was a mass of wreckage. The ship floated for five minutes and dived for the last time.

"Out of ten men, two were dead and three missing. We never got credit for the 'mission.'"

The big international news in September was the surrender of Italy. "One Down and Two to Go" posters appeared on the billboards of the base. Although the Italians had given up, there were still numerous German divisions in Italy, and there was no prospect of an early armistice.

Early in September, a young lieutenant named Sumner H. Reeder distinguished himself on a mission to Stuttgart, Germany. His right waist gunner, Orrin W. Furlong, later testified . . .

"I was right waist gunner on the B-17 'Squawkin' Hawk II' on a mission to Stuttgart on 6 September 1943.

"Bad luck struck us just before we started our bomb run. At least four enemy fighters hit us from head on and high, doing plenty of damage in just one pass. Their 20mm shells fatally wounded the co-pilot, F/O H. E. Edeburn, dangerously wounded the bombardier and navigator, Lts. P. Delao and R. Engel,

and sprayed our pilot, Lt. Sumner H. Reeder with many steel fragments from the same shell which killed the co-pilot.

"With our nose shattered, our oxygen system punctured, one wing fuel tank perforated and the fighters turning for another pass, Reeder weighed our chances, then quickly dived for better protection into a formation of our planes below us. The Jerries, with reinforcements, followed us down, and we started about a two-hour battle while flying with the formation.

"Reeder must have been suffering considerably from his wounds and logically must have been mentally confused by the shock of the 20mm that burst near his right side. His flying under these handicaps was no less than inspired. He answered every warning call over the interphone with instant and correct action, and gave all of us gunners the best possible advantage in our efforts to beat off the enemy. Incidentally, all the time we were fighting for our lives, Reeder would sing little tunes and wisecrack over the interphone from time to time, trying to keep our spirits up.

"When our attackers at last left us, Reeder started to take the ship to a lower altitude; our oxygen shortage had become acute, and we had to get breathable air or else. No sooner had we dropped away from the formation than another bunch of Jerries pounced upon us. Reeder put ' Squawkin' Hawk ' into a dive such as I doubt was ever made by a B-17 before or since. We somehow survived and went down about 14,000 feet at the rate of more than 300 miles an hour. Reeder pulled out into the temporary shelter of a cloud. It would have been a great feat even for a strong, uninjured pilot.

"Once in the clouds, he played hare-and-hounds with the Germans, ducking in and out, through and reverse, wherever he could find cover. After about an hour of this, the Germans finally left us, probably because they were low on fuel. Then, with no navigator, confused by his wild evasive action, Reeder, guided only by headings received by the radio operator, got us to and across the English Channel.

"Knowing that it was vital to get medical attention for the two wounded men, he made a perfect landing on an R.A.F. fighter field, on a strip not calculated for heavy bomber landings. He put the shattered plane down without brakes . . . the hydraulic system had also been shot out.

"If it had not been for our wounded officers, who could not possibly have bailed out, I feel sure that the pilot would have given orders to abandon ship over France. As matters stood, he never even hinted at such a thing, though the chances for our ever getting back to England looked almost nonexistent. . . ."

Not to be overlooked in the report were the actions of R. Engle, the seriously wounded navigator, who took over the co-pilot's seat and aided Reeder after Engineer-gunner H. Pope removed the dying co-pilot to the hatchway.

The story of Reeder's airmanship was to terminate tragically many months later, when after he had returned to the United States in the rank of major, he crashed and lost his life on a routine flight off the coast of Florida.

The month of September 1943 saw two strides forward in the direction of safety in the air and higher efficiency in adverse weather.

An editorial in the New York *Times* told that . . . "A London firm, specializing since 1772 in the manufacture of swords, is now beating its product into something much more useful at the moment. It is making suits of mail for American airmen. . . . Thus the cycle rolls around again, and American fighters, like the Yankee at King Arthur's Court, find themselves back in medieval armor. . . ."

Many of the combat men were somewhat dubious about the weighty flak suits, but they soon clamored for the protection the suits afforded, and many returned from missions with chunks of flak embedded in the suit that otherwise would have jaggedly cut into flesh.

To this added degree of safety, the unveiling of the new pathfinder technique on September 27 was another tremendous Allied gain. When Hertz discovered radio waves back in 1886, even the longest-range prophets could scarcely foresee his discovery aiding a formation of heavy bombers to pick out a target marked for destruction some 57 years later.

Weather had always held the greatest terrors for aviation, and when American and British science rushed their electronic studies to completion immediately prior to the outbreak of war, it was felt that the eventual use of this method, called Radar, would definitely shorten the war. That hope turned into reality.

On land, it supplied effective defense against raiding enemy planes by automatically computing for, aiming and firing anti-aircraft guns. At sea, its accuracy sank many enemy ships through darkness and fog. In the air, it permitted heavy bombers to drop their loads accurately despite full instrument weather.

At first, these lead pathfinder (PFF) aircraft were held at central bases with their crews and dis-

patched to the groups prior to each mission. Later, it was found more expedient to assign lead ships directly to each group, assign and train the lead crews from the base itself. The war in the air entered a new and radio-active phase.

On October 8, 1943, the Germans really plastered London. The sirens wailed down the dark streets, the hollow echoes of the anti-aircraft batteries were heard in the distance and the falling bits of shrapnel sounded like skeletons on a tin roof. Sleep was impossible, and some of the sounds of war penetrated even beneath the good earth that protected so many of London's inhabitants.

The Americans in town were watching from the streets while the more cautious English hustled for the shelters. Since the American Government had spent some sixty-odd dollars to get them to Blighty, the Yanks quite reasonably did not wish to miss any of the show . . .

Major John Egan, celebrating his initial pass in England since arriving back in May, was one of the onlookers. The morning of the ninth brought him a breakfast of fried eggs and double Scotch, as well as the morning papers. The Eighth Air Force had lost thirty Forts over Bremen. A quick phone call contacted the base, and Egan heard that his friend, "Buck" Cleven, had gone down swinging. That hurt.

It had always seemed to Egan that if there were only two people left flying B-One Sevens over der Fuehrer's real estate, they would be named Cleven and Egan. He suddenly thought of Cleven's pink pants, the most beautiful slacks worn by any male character in all of England. Egan asked whether the team had a game scheduled for the next day. He wanted to pitch.

Years afterward, Egan could remember the course of events when he returned to the base . . . "Bill Veal, with a bloodhound look, meets me at the field and asks how I feel, to which I reply, 'I'm browned off more than somewhat and will bring a load not of what Farmer Gray hauled away and dump it all over those Germans.' People, especially from the 350th Squadron, are pretty badly shaken, because strong characters and solid citizens are difficult to find to work on the milk runs, particularly on the routes to the Germans, who are short on food but insist on shooting up the milk wagons we are driving.

"The spirit in the group is low because it was firmly believed that Cleven was invincible. His remark of 'Another milk run' after every mission was typical. Twice in his twenty missions, he didn't believe the remark. One mission was Regensburg. The other time I led the group and Cleven was leading the low squadron. Upon returning to the base, I picked him up in my jeep, Slow Leak, which means Drip, and said, 'Another milk run, eh?' to which he replied: 'Yeah, another milk run, but boy, that was the most accurate flak I've ever seen.'

To this, I gave the rather expressive rejoinder, 'Nuts!', mainly because I see plenty of fighters, but no flak. Cleven is hurt and insists that there was flak, calls me several bad names and insists that I look at his ship. I immediately do this, and believe me, there *was* flak that day. As far as Buck was concerned, it was accurate, and the reason I didn't see any was because Cleven was running interference between the Germans and Egan, stopping the stuff with his B-One Seven."

Back on the base, Egan sweated out a mission led by Col. Harding to Marienburg. The planes returned after an excellent bombing job, and as soon as the tired birds sat down, Egan demanded and received permission to lead the next day's raid to Munster. He left his lucky white leather jacket behind. Cleven had disliked it because it was not exactly clean.

The Forts taxied out for the Munster raid on the morning of October 10, 1943 . . . Egan, in the lead ship, later recalled every detail of the fateful mission . . .

"The briefing was the same as usual, until the S-2, my good friend Miner Shaw, flashes the photo picture of the target, which is Munster, on the screen with his Bell Opticant. (Intelligence Officers just couldn't call that gadget a Slide Machine.) The Aiming Point and Mean Point of Impact are the center of the old walled city of Munster.

"Shaw's voice drones on that we are going to sock a residential district. At this point, I find myself on my feet cheering. Others who have lost close friends in the past few raids join in the cheering, 'cause here is a chance to kill Germans, the spawners of race hatred and minority oppression. It is a dream mission to avenge the death of a buddy.

"The mission had not been set up for me to kill the hated Hun, but as a last resort to stop rail transportation in the Ruhr Valley. Practically all of the rail workers in the valley were being billeted in Munster. It was decided that a pursuit and fighter-bomber attack could not effectively stop up Ruhr Valley. A good big bomber raid could really mess up the very efficient German rail system by messing up its personnel.

"People who never witnessed bomber pilots taxi out for a mission in the ETO during the summer and fall of '43 really missed seeing boys who were for a

short time big men. Mind now, all of these boy-men weren't fighters, i. e: professional soldiers or adventurers. They were people who were in the Air Force for various reasons; better food, better pay, better ratings, better glamour, better kind of discipline, better chance to slug Adolph, better chance of being killed . . .

"These boy-men commanded no less than nine other individuals and booted four thousand horses in the tail with their right hand to get their big-gas birds into the air and keep them there in the face of the toughest, roughest opposition mankind ever faced.

"We are airborne and start our climb, our formation scraped together by the best Service Groups in all Bomberdom . . . Nothing unusual in climbing, except for supercharger trouble. This isn't too bad if you don't pick up too many holes in the wrong places. It's Tail-End Charlie that needs the manifold pressure, not the stoop that leads the formation. (I say 'stoop' because 2nd Lieutenants believe that every time a senior officer is promoted, he is required to turn in part of his brains.)

"There are abortions. J. D. Brady is leading the group with me as incommodious kibitzer. It is Brady's first time in the number one position, so he's enjoying the easy flying the 'one' boy enjoys. Later, of course, the unholy Hun tries most desperately to knock number one to galley west.

"The coast comes up and Brady makes the sign of the cross just as the first burst of flak goes off . . . one of those close ones with pretty red centers. We're being covered by P-47's, and the dive and zoom boys couldn't take us all the way to the target because they didn't have the range.

"From here to the target things weren't dull, and occasionally a large bird would leave to land in a place he hadn't signed a clearance for. Just as we approached the I.P., I called out to the group that our high cover was leaving, watched them go, looked straight ahead and said: ' Jesus Christ! Pursuits at twelve o'clock. Looks like they're on us! '

"These were the last and only words I was to broadcast for many months, with or without CAA or Army Airway approval. A flak battery of six or eight guns whose officer in charge must have bore-sighted them on a captured B-One Seven went off directly below and in our Queen, who died proudly, with integrated second timing by a bee-hive of about 150 . . . that's right, 150 . . . German fighters who went through us. The results of this flak and fighter episode can best be expressed by mathematical formula:

$$\frac{(13\ \text{B17}+131\ \text{M})\ (100\ \text{FW}+50\ \text{ME})}{3\ \text{R}} = 120\ \text{PW}+3\ \text{R}—20\ \text{E/A}$$

"Or . . . Thirteen B-17's plus 131 men times 100 Focke-Wulfes plus 50 Messerschmitts divided by the Third Reich equals 120 prisoners of war in the Third Reich minus twenty enemy aircraft that were destroyed.

"This whole thing was disastrous more than somewhat, as of thirteen ships, only Lt. Rosenthal and his Riveters got back to England on an engine and a half.

"As for our ship, it was obvious that we'd had it. Brady and I pulled off our oxygen masks to say simultaneously . . . Number Two has quit . . . There goes One . . . and there goes Three. Number Four proceeded to run away. Dave Solomon came up from the nose looking quite messy to tell us that we have to leave the formation because Hambone Hamilton had numerous holes in him and wanted to go home. I assured him that we'd left the formation. After he left, Hoerr made certain that the boys in the nose got out while Engineer Blum checked the after end. Brady was having difficulty keeping the ship on an even keel while I ran the administrative end of the abandon ship.

"The goons were still shooting at us from above, below and both sides. I asked the co-pilot how we were doing, and he says, quote, "Everything is alright, and besides we just caught fire," unquote.

"We scramble to the bomb bay where we pull an ' After you, dear Gaston ' act. Standing on the walk I say ' Go ahead, Brady, ' since I'm the senior man on board. Brady says, ' No, go ahead. ' I don't see Brady from this day until two years later, when he confirmed that he wanted to be out last because it was his ship and crew. Anyhow, we stood there, me with ' Go ahead, Brady, ' and Brady with ' After you. ' We prattled some more, when the nicest spaced holes you ever did see, a row about six inches apart and about six inches below our feet appeared along the entire length of the bomb bay door. They were thirty calibre punctuation marks, and I say ' I'll see you, Brady,' step out, count one and pull the rip-cord about the time I go by the ball turret.

"The 'chute opened without a jar and the family jewels were safe. Looking around, I saw three of our little chums, the 190's. They came in, and do you know what, they start shooting at Mrs. Egan's little boy Johnnie . . . who told himself that this was a situation he couldn't talk himself out of. My 'chute was now full of holes, and so was Mrs. Egan's boy . . . They came back for another pass at me, and I took a very dim view of the whole thing. They finally left, probably thinking that I'm very dead, not knowing that I'm Irish.

"Coming down three miles at a time takes a bit

of time, so I light a cigarette. This was not an uncommon occurrence among descending American airmen, who through government purchase owned the right kind of lighters. The loneliest feeling any living person has ever experienced is the feeling one has suspended in a parachute over enemy territory upon which is raining B-17's. It looked a bit as though I was going to land in a town, so I was forced to slip the 'chute, then slip it again to avoid a woods.

"My landing, like that of most first jumpers, was unexpected at the time it happened. I landed lightly on my feet, my 'chute buckled back toward me, so I detached it from the harness and took off on the double, mainly because about 350 of Adolph's bosom buddies were interested in my ill-being. En route for the woods, I shed equipment on the double, flying boots one at a time, goggles, harness and Mae West. I made the woods and gave the Krauts the slip . . ."

As Egan was making his getaway (only to be captured eventually), Lt. Robert Rosenthal and his Riveters (the remainder of the crew consisting of Lts. W. Lewis, R. Bailey, C. Milburn, T/Sgt. M. Boccuzzi, T/Sgt. C. Hall, S/Sgts. R. Robinson, L. Darling, J. Shaffer, Jr. and W. DeBlasio) were returning to the base with the story of the catastrophic mission.

The "Missing in Action" list almost matched the loading list. Lts. J. Justice, W. MacCarter, W. Beddow, R. Atchinson, C. Walts, M. Beatty, J. Stephens, R. Kramer, C. Thompson, E. Stork, Capt. C. Cruikshank and Major Egan . . . A lengthy list of planes and men now strewn over German soil. Some men were dead, some men hid along roadsides, seeking to evade German search parties, while others were on their way to the Stalag-Lufts . . .

The gloom that spread over the base could have been cut with the sharp end of a rolling pin. The weather did not help, as East Anglian mist grew heavier and men took to their long johns, known in higher circles as winter underwear.

New crews soon poured into the base, and S-2 was busy at ground school. Despite the staggering losses of Munster, the Hundredth (fast achieving the title of "Bloody Hundredth"), bounced back four days later . . .

General Anderson, commanding the VIII Bomber Command, sent a message that went the rounds on October 14:

"This air operation today is the most important air operation yet conducted in this war. The target must be destroyed. It is of vital importance to the enemy . . ."

The target was Schweinfurt, where plants ground out the ball-bearings so essential for aircraft, as well as tanks, guns and all major items of military equipment. The majority of the town's population was engaged in the ball-bearing industry.

Eight planes of the Hundredth took part in this mission, led by Lt. O. "Cowboy" Roane and Lt. E. Hughes. The group flew with the 95th and 390th Bomb Groups.

Aircraft of the Hundreth sliced through fighter attacks to the target, destroying seven enemy fighters without loss to themselves, and released their loads with excellent results on the Mean Point of Impact. Ball-bearings were strewn over Germany, and for a while, younger Nazis had plenty of marble material.

These early months were months of the rough variety. The planes were not yet equipped with chin turret twin guns. Cold, thin air whipped through the waist windows. Fighter support was inadequate, as the "Little Friends" could not accompany the big boys on deep penetrations. There were plenty of reasons which would have explained away the failure of daylight precision bombing . . . if it had failed. Instead, these small groups of men, scattered over the ancient soil of England, slowly began to vindicate the long-range statisticians, planners and defenders of the American blueprint for aerial attack.

In those days of tough opposition, when the replacements were slower, the losses higher, and the ebb and flow of morale paralleled the tide of battle, each air crew was a vital part of the whole, and each was stamped with a definite personality. Their plane, in turn, labeled with the fruits of ingenuity, was an integral part of the crew. This sharp picture of individuality later became blurred as the enlarged scope of aerial warfare sacrificed identity for mass effect and weight.

Yet "Squawkin' Hawk" . . . "Piccadilly Lily" . . . "Hark Luck" . . . left their mark with the airmen as well as on the Reich. Reams of Public Relations yarns were shipped to the States concerning the planes with the personalities . . . the "Laden Maidens" . . . "Messie Bessies" . . . The planes like "Hang the Expense" . . . "Torchy" . . . "Horny" . . . "Nine Little Yanks and a Jerk" . . . "Phartzac" and "Mismanookie" . . .

Then at the end of October, the group stuck a lone candle on its birthday cake, and the base took time out for the festivities. Each squadron held an anniversary party and dance, at the completion of which many men staggered after the water wagon.

The officers celebration managed to procure one entire roast pig, M1, complete with apple in kisser.

The market in which the porker had been purchased had been a suspiciously dark one.

The following day featured races around the perimeter, a tug of war and a Liars Contest won by S/Sgt. Malcuit. The parties were closely followed by November, which arrived shrouded in a mantle of choice English fog, grounding the planes for two days.

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Despite the poor weather that lasted into the new year, the air war was stepped up into the one-thousand-plane-per mission class for the first time.

Seventeen planes of the Hundredth hit the synthetic oil refinery at Gelsenkirchen on November 5. Enemy aircraft rolled in for a fight, and in the struggle, one fort, piloted by Lt. T. Martin, went down. T/Sgt. J. Boyle, radio man on E. Hughes' ship, was struck and killed by a flak fragment which missed the plates of his flak suit.

Lts. W. Flesh and J. Gossage landed at Tangmore with a shattered, flaming plane, and told the story of their desperate plight in the target area . . . a plight so desperate that the bail out order had been justified. The pilot and co-pilot landed their plane alone, their eight crewmen having bailed out over the target . . .

A near-tragedy was averted on the 13th. Col. Harding was featured in this Bremen raid. The Pathfinder equipment on the aircraft failed, and immediately prior to reaching enemy territory, the oxygen supply gave out on the starboard side of the ship. Col. Harding slumped over unconscious, and it was through rapid action by gunner J. Parks that a spare mask was adjusted before anoxia had taken too strong a hold.

Planes of the group took off on the 16th in a sweep to Norway. Building No. 16 nestled among the other structures in the great hydro-electric plant at Rjuken. In the basement of this building, a 10,000 gallon capacity heavy water tank was indispensable in the manufacture of a new and powerful explosive. A hit on this building would probably destroy the entire plant.

"Cowboy" Roane and Capt. Sam Barr led the long haul with a full cargo of thousand pounders, as Capt. J. "Bubbles" Payne did the direction-finding and Capt. R. Peel hovered over the bombsight.

Two groups had preceded the Hundredth over the target, failed to bomb, and left prop-wash and persistent heavy condensation trails for the Hundredth to contend with. The loads were released from a true altitude of less than 10,000 feet.

Capt. J. Swartout, whose high squadron had not dropped, led his planes in a second bomb run, and later reported that the entire area was in flames. As Building No. 16 was racked by explosion and collapsed, taking with it most of the great plant, the Hundredth formation headed back toward the North Sea without loss.

Keeping step with the lengthening list of completed missions, men finished their tours of twenty-five combat sorties and headed back to the Zone of Interior, which spelled United States, rest and recuperation for all of a month. New crews replaced them, and went through the usual ground schooling and extra-curricular work. The arrival of a new crew was the signal also for a ghoulish group of characters to apply what might be called the "Flakking process" to the newcomers. This jolly occupation was not indigenous with the Hundredth, but it probably reached one of the higher levels of perfection at Thorpe Abbotts.

A new crew, after detraining at Diss, was stacked along with their small mountain of luggage into a truck, which headed for the base and pulled into one of the sites at the orderly room. As the men piled out to case the joint, they heard shouts of "Fresh meat!" and "Meat on the table!" emanating from the combat barracks. Their indoctrination had begun.

After being assigned to barracks, they lugged their equipment over to the living quarters. The four officers became a unit in the WAAF Site, built originally to house members of the British Women's Auxiliary Air Force, while the enlisted men lived in one of the squadron areas. The co-pilot received his initial morale boost when he found that the bed he was to occupy was vacated only yesterday by a fellow who was last seen parachuting down over one of the more unhealthy regions of the Ruhr Valley.

Draped over all the best sacks in one end of the barracks, the old crews looked extremely combattish, just a bored bunch of veterans disdaining to pay a lot of attention to the new Junior Bird men.

Before long, the men crowded into several little clusters, finding out all the poop about where they had trained, where they went through phases, and is that dirty Blowhard still Tech officer at such and such field? This was preliminary groundwork. Soon, one of the men asked the question . . . "Is it as rough over here as we've heard?"

The flak started popping. In very few minutes, B-17's were strewn about the barracks . . . planes were crashing into mountain-sides . . . into the sea . . . in France and in Germany. By the end of the day, the boys were really getting the inside dope. At least one Hershey-barred officer cornered a fledgling in the bar,


1 - THE RETURN OF A MISSION


2


5


6

cadged a drink, and let go both barrels until our incipient hero broke away and headed off into the fog.

This was but standard flakking technique. At least one variation originated with the group. This was the "Ghost of NAAFI Hall." The ghost stood eight or nine feet tall, and wore full flying equipment, including an oxygen mask. He would stalk through the wall of the building and stand at the foot of his old bed, staring down at the occupant. Of course, there were no actual eyewitnesses to these scenes, but there were men who knew a fellow that swears he was present. This fellow had unfortunately gone home two days earlier.

Just in case, though, some of the old fellows hung 45's or carbines at the head of their beds and warned the new men to be extremely careful about returning late at night.

As the flakking technique grew of age, so did the group. The first Berlin briefing was held, but the mission was scrubbed before daylight without explanation. Col. Harding warned the men against security violations. The ground echelon seemed to know the vicinity of the targets just as soon as the airmen found them out.

Since the arrival of the group at Thorpe Abbotts, a defense team had been in training, designed with enough strength and mobility either to overcome any lesser enemy threat or to render installations useless to a powerful attacking force.

On November 14, two hundred members of the West Norfolk Sub-District Command Home Forces simulated an attack on the station by enemy paratroops and airborne units. They approached from the east and west ends of the perimeter and attempted an enveloping movement. Defending units moved with enough speed to meet all threats. Surprisingly enough, no lives were lost, and a critique of umpires decided that the station had been successfully defended.

As Thanksgiving bore down, Lt. Col. Robert Flesher, the Air Executive, went to London as the Hundredth representative to the reception of the Royal Family. He returned in time to lead the group to Bremen on the 29th.

The Hundredth led the Division formation on this mission, and was attacked by enemy aircraft at 1427 hours. No bombers were lost and no men wounded by enemy fire . . . One man, however, returned a casualty. His name was Nelson King, and he flew as radio man with Lt. F. Lauro.

With the planes high in the thin, sub-zero air, ball turret gunner M. Schrier suddenly felt weak. His oxygen mask had frozen, ice forming in the exhalation passages and inlet hose. He felt himself losing consciousness, and cried out over the interphone. Waist gunner W. Heathman quickly answered and removed Schrier from the turret to the radio compartment, where he and T/Sgt. King worked vainly to replace the mask. The electric gloves proved an obstacle to efficiency, and King, having already plugged into a walk-around bottle of oxygen which allowed him greater freedom of movement, realized that there was only one way to save the delirious gunner.

Although the aircraft was flying up over 20,000 feet, and with the temperature close to fifty degrees below zero, King removed his gloves and fastened the new mask to Schrier's face. At this point, a new and terrible factor arose. Call it fate or destiny or the forces of circumstance . . . Nelson King's oxygen bottle froze, and he passed out.

He was finally brought back to consciousness, but in the stress and necessity of saving his life, the hands from which he had removed his gloves were neglected. Frost-bite develops rapidly in sub-zero temperature. Nelson King saved a life, and in doing so, sacrificed his fingers . . .

The base settled down for the winter. Fog and rain, then for variety, rain and fog, kept the mist-shrouded bombers on their haunches. The men sat beside the Nissen hut fires and talked home town. An occasional Red Alert disturbed the even flow of boredom and cold. The Nazis still had hopes of victory, and managed to slip planes past the coastal defenses. In Russia, the men read, the Red Army had turned the tide of battle in the Kiev pocket. The Swiss reported that Germans were preparing to launch a new twelve-ton rocket at Britain. . . . The Pacific Charter was signed by Roosevelt, Churchill and Chiang Kai-Shek, and pledged Japanese expulsion from every island with the exception of their home group . . . General MacArthur landed at New Britain. . . .

Despite the dismal weather, men still took their passes, and those that did not head for the big town usually ended up in Norwich. Twenty miles on a straight line from the sleepy village of Scole, the city of Norwich contained some 100,000 souls and what seemed a pub for each family. Shoe factories turned out footware, and the Seward and Paterson brewery turned out wartime brew that was quickly consumed by the patrons of the crammed public houses. Bach's was the leading den of alcoholic iniquity, from whence men of unsteady gait headed for the blurred outlines of the Base Liberty Run trucks.

The Maid's Head . . . the Wolf Pack . . . The Horse Barracks dispensed mild and bitters, and fortunate were those who struck out for the lesser known, outlying districts of the sprawling city, where it was occasionally possible to procure a shot of higher-proof content.

Class trade was plied at the Royal Hotel, and one step down, the Bell Hotel did a roaring trade.

Norwich is a good-looking cathedral town, although much of it had been blasted and gutted by the blitz before the Hundredth arrived. Norwich Cathedral lifted a graceful spire to the sky, its classic lines a landmark of Norfolk. On the cathedral grounds, the Red Cross held forth in the Bishop's Palace, where food, a place to sleep and entertainment were inevitably on tap. The lawn was used for relaxing. Down the street a piece, the Kings Street Dormitories took care of the overflow.

Aside from the usual run of movie houses, Norwich boasted of three theatres where live entertainment was produced. Foremost in this triumvirate was the Theatre Royal, where touring companies set up productions that ran a week before moving on. These productions ran the gamut from the latest bedroom farce to the plays of Shaw.

The most unique theatre in Norwich was the Maddermarket, a tiny, half-timbered structure, where a dynamic, diminutive producer and director named Nugent Monck presented a series of plays every season. The plays ranged from Aristophanes to Saroyan, each presented for a week. The actors were unpaid and the performances occasionally unpolished, but the stage and the audience seemed to be imbued with the spirit of the great dramas presented.

The third theatre was the inevitable Hippodrome, with its strictly English Music Hall type of variety for "them as liked it" . . . Lancashire comedians brought loud guffaws, jugglers elicited "Ahs" and "Ohs," and Swiss yodelers performed their vocal contortions to full houses.

All was not beer and skits . . . Bremen and Munster were visited again by the group during December 1943. One plane was lost in an attack on the German port of Emden on December 11, when Lt. J. Haddox failed to return. Lt. T. Goupill, Jr., did not come back from Munster on the 22nd. Two days later, 2,000 English-based planes blasted secret German sites in the Calais area, and all returned safely.

Then it was Christmas, the traditional dinner was being prepared, and music floated across the base from the Tannoy speakers. At the Red Cross Aero Club, children from the neighboring towns began arriving at 1000 hours, were removed from the GI trucks and shown into the club. Someone counted 129. It seemed like more. The cat retreated behind a bookcase while Chaplain Teska stood his ground.

The party started off with hot chocolate, cake and cookies. The children were so absorbed in the sweets that no one noticed Sgt. Lathrop as old St. Nick in the doorway. After a hesitant moment, there was a shout of "Father Christmas!" and the children besieged him.

Each child was ecorted into the lounge, where Santa supervised the awarding of gifts. There was a toy, a bag of candy and gum for each. Led by Santa, everyone joined in the singing of carols. Everyone, that is, except the driver who answered a phone call from Brockdish telling of forty additional children waiting patiently in front of the church.

In this crisis, the trucks roared off, and fifteen minutes later, the late-comers had joined the festivities. At noon, all were packed off, safe and happy, including two little girls who cried when they failed to find their coats.

Some days later, a blushing Major Standish was interviewed on his reactions to the party. He displayed a line from one letter he had received from a grateful parent . . . "Bobby had such a nice time. He thought you were Mr. Winston Churchill . . ."

The year 1943 closed with two missions, Ludwigshafen and Paris. The former mission saw two planes and twenty men failing to return, as enemy aircraft shot down Lts. M. Leininger and F. Smith. The raid also revealed a story of unusual heroism.

Heroism is one of the stocks in trade of warfare, and it is one of the paradoxes of war that the general blatant inhumanity is occasionally softened by acts of man's inherent humanity to man, and of his disregard for personal safety.

Lt. Dean Radke's ship had sustained severe flak damage in the target area, and southwest of Abbeville, was attacked by a pair of FW 190's. 20mm shells riddled the left wing and nose. One shell socked through the navigator's compartment and struck the co-pilot, Lt. R. Digby, in the head. He was immediately killed, and shell fragments struck Radke, wounding him in the face, head and in the neck beside his jugular vein. One fragment completely closed his right eye, and splinters from the instrument panel had been driven into the muscles of his right leg, rendering it useless.

The oxygen mask had been torn from his face, and the concussion rocked Radke in unconsciousness and stunned the engineer, S/Sgt. V. Pinner, who was

hurled against the turret controls. Upon regaining his senses, Pinner thought first to escape, as he was certain that the plane had been blown apart.

Through the smoke, he saw the pilot and the co-pilot slumped over the controls. Blood was spattered over the shell-pitted compartment. The windows were shattered and broken.

At this time, Radke regained consciousness and saw Pinner about to leave. He yelled to him and the engineer returned to his station. Radke then called the rest of the crew and reassured them.

Most of the crew were never aware that the co-pilot had been killed or that Radke himself was severely wounded. Bombardier Lt. W. Agnetti was called up and moved the co-pilot to the navigator's compartment, then returned to assist Radke.

Due to the loss of one engine and severed control cables, the plane lagged behind the formation. Radke was now confronted with the problem of his uncertainty as to retaining consciousness long enough to bring the ship and crew home. He made the decision over interphone and attempted to regain position in the formation. With fingers useless because of severe cuts, Radke skillfully used the butts of his hands to manipulate the controls, and fought his way back into position.

Upon reaching Thorpe Abbotts, flying control authorized a digression from normal traffic. Radke brought his ship in and made a perfect landing. The long afternoon of racked nerves and death was ended.

If the men could have foreseen what the year 1944 would bring, perhaps they would not have looked forward to it with so many misgivings. The year was fated to be a big one in the history of the world. It was fated to be the year of D-Day, of Omaha Beach and Utah Beach, of millions of tons shipped across a narrow channel in the largest military operation of all time. It was the year of supply and movement, of Operation Bolero and Operation Overlord. . . .

At Thorpe Abbotts, however, January 1944 was just another cold, muddy month. Senior officer personnel changes were made. Lt. Col. Dungan, who had relieved Lt. Col. Dauncey as Ground Executive back in June, was in turn relieved by Maj. Karl Standish, and Capt. Horace Varian stepped into the Group Adjutant slot.

As the tactical and strategic combat missions were being clicked off against the Germans, supply tonnage piled up on the island. In 1943, the figures had jumped from 130,000 tons in January to one million tons of equipment in October. On D-Day morning, fifteen million tons of equipment backed up the men across the Channel.

Through January and February, the softening-up process of heavy bombing continued. Submarine pens at Kiel, chemicals at Ludwigshafen, the rocket coast, marshaling yards, aircraft factories at Brunswick, all felt the weight of high explosives and incendiaries. On January 5, bombardier Joe Armanini located an important nuts and bolts factory at Nuess after bad weather had forced the group from the primary target. Bombload after bombload put the plant out of commission.

After a January in which no losses were sustained, the next month found the Luftwaffe strong enough to down nine planes. Lts. W. Green, J. Brown and R. McPhee failed to return from Frankfurt on the 4th . . . Lts. Scoggins and D. Croft failed to return from Brunswick on the 10th . . . On the 21st, Lt. W. Fletcher was reported missing, and on the 25th, Regensburg received another visit, the formations led by Lt. Col. Bennett and Lt. F. Mason. Once more, the target was plastered, and returning crewmen testified that the entire target area was covered with billowing smoke. One aircraft, that of Lt. S. McLain, was lost.

March 1944 checked off another milestone in the history of aerial warfare, ETO . . .

Berlin . . . Big B . . . Capital of the Reich, the city that the Nazi big-wigs pointed at with pride, a heavy city of squat, ugly government buildings, was finally reached by daylight. Many men and many planes were sacrificed in the March battles as the Hundredth carried the war to the stronghold of Fascism.

To the entire group, almost a year later, went the honor of receiving its second Presidential Citation:

GENERAL ORDERS) 3 March, 1945
No. 14

"The 100th Bombardment Group (H) is cited for outstanding performance of duty in action against the enemy in connection with the initial series of successful attacks against Berlin, Germany, 4, 6, and 8 March 1944. Overcoming unusually hazardous weather conditions which forced all but one other unit of the Eighth Air Force to bomb targets of opportunity or abandon the mission, the 100th Bombardment Group (H) resolutely continued on to release its bombs on the German capital in the first American operation over Berlin, 4 March 1944. The mission was successfully completed despite solid layers of clouds and dense, persistent vapor trails which

lasted throughout the perilous flight. Accurate anti-aircraft fire was encountered in the target area, and the bomber formations were continually harassed by sharp attacks from 20 to 25 enemy aircraft from the initial point to the rally point."

The Hundredth formation, led by Major Magee Fuller and Lt. H. Devore, was attacked at 1310 hours. T/Sgt. Harold Stearns, top turret gunner flying with Lt. F. Granack, eyed an ME 109 as it came in fast from 12 o'clock high to level. He began firing at 400 yards and after a long burst, smoke poured from the enemy plane. It passed over and dived to the right. Waist gunner G. Brown saw the plane go into a spin and navigator M. Geisler saw the Jerry plane on fire as it spun into the clouds.

This was first blood . . . the first German plane downed by an American over Berlin . . .

At 1324 hours, bombs were pitched through the clouds into Berlin, another first in the history of the Hundredth . . .

One aircraft, that of Lt. S. Seaton, failed to return with crewmen W. Clayton, C. DeWolfe, G. Ofiesh, J. Judd, P. Hogan, R. Cook, A. LaBrecque, L. Malone and L. Hull.

The first crack had been made in Berlin's armor, and the group set out again two days later to widen the incision . . . Major A. "Bucky" Elton and Devore led . . .

"Approximately half way to the target on the mission to Berlin, 6 March 1944, the 100th Bombardment Group (H), without fighter support, was viciously attacked by overwhelming numbers of enemy aircraft. Despite the repeated, furious onslaughts of the reckless attackers, which accounted for the loss of half the bombers in the group's formation, the remaining fortresses battled their way through to the target."

S/Sgt. D. Walker, flying with Lt. M. Cope, their plane out of formation with one engine out, fired from his right waist position and saw one of six attacking ME 109's bank off and nose dive, smoking and beginning to spin out of control . . . The wounded Bryan in the tail hit one . . . Sgt. B. Devine, flying left waist with Lt. E. Ferbrache, scored at 400 yards after the attacking fighter wounded him in both arms . . . T/Sgt. D. Thompson took care of two FW 190's . . . T/Sgt. J. Verbovski pulled the hat trick with a trio of ME 109's, while S/Sgt. W. Sapp got two . . .

Guns were smoking and gunners were wounded, but the toll of Nazis was high . . .

S/Sgt. J. Kelley and Lt. H. Greenberg, Sgt. G. Donahue and Lt. Felsenstein scored hits . . . Walters, Coulam, Madden, Lyon, Davis and Dickenson watched enemy planes smoke and die . . . Payne, Knudson and Eresman, Cox, Morrison and Heathman scored. Kranzler, Kroenke, Smith, Bunting, Pardee, Johnson, Brady and Fantone all scored . . .

The gunners were busy . . .

"The gallant crewmen of the 100th Bombardment Group (H) destroyed 26 enemy aircraft, probably destroyed 16, and damaged 6 more in this historic aerial engagement, and braved heavy, accurate concentrations of anti-aircraft fire to release their bombs over the assigned objective."

The losses were heavy, and men died in their ships . . . Men were blasted out of the ships . . . Men floated down through the sky-strewn wreckage . . .

When Lt. M. Rish went down, his ship broke in half at the radio room, then exploded, blowing navigator Lingenfelter out the side . . . Lautenschlager's ship flared up as gunner J. Stryjeski vainly fought the flames . . . An enemy fighter clipped Swartout and Lauro's fin . . . The German fighters were later reported as having fired on men dangling from their parachutes . . .

The Berlin area was filled with the flaming and wrecked planes of Capt. D. Miner, Lts. G. Brannan, M. Rish, W. Terry, S. Barrick, E. Handorf, F. Granack, R. Koper, Z. Kendall, J. Lautenschlager, D. Radke, S. Bartun, W. Murray, A. Amiero and C. Montgomery.

"Undismayed by the heavy losses and severe battle damage sustained on the mission of 6 March, this intrepid group, whose efficient maintenance personel had the flak-ridden bombers ready for operations on 8 March, continued its deadly assault on the nerve center of the enemy's war machine."

It was a mission calculated to turn the blood cold. For, with unexplainable and seemingly savage irony, the group was required to retrace the identical, deadly route of two days earlier . . .

The men, fully expecting a massacre, felt trapped and hopeless, but accepted their lot with an outward show of resignation that covered their inward turmoil. This was suicide!

It was suicide . . . and yet, as Col. John Bennett led the formation of fifteen crews to the target, not one plane aborted . . .

Lts. M. Wilson, G. Gough, L. Morgan, C. Harper and J. Gibbons flew with Bennett in the lead squadron, while Capt. R. Rosenthal, Lts. R. Shoens, R. Monrad, J. Massol, J. Harper, N. Chapman, R. Helmick, W. Forsythe and C. Mylius flew as the high squadron.

"Once again vastly superior numbers of hostile fighters were encountered and although the city's desperate defenders forced the leading wing to attack a target of opportunity, the 100th Bombardment Group (H) maintained a tight defensive formation and assumed the lead of the entire Eighth Air Force."

At 1239 hours, the escort left and enemy fighters closed in, first concentrating on the 45th Combat Wing, diving through their formations in groups of 4, 6 and 8, flying wing-tip to wing-tip. In the ensuing fierce battle, men from the Hundredth watched nine fortresses shot from the 45th Wing formation and four from the 95th and 390th Bomb Group formations. . . .

One Hundredth plane, piloted by Lt. N. Chapman, was lost after engine trouble had forced it from the comparative safety of the tight formation. . . .

At 1412 hours, after it was realized that the 45th Wing was not on the correct heading into the target, Lt. Col. Bennett, conferring with Capt. L. Bull, the lead navigator, decided to make the turn and assume the lead of the far-flung armada that stretched as far as the eye could see over Germany. . . .

Once again, bombs fell on Berlin, and the Hundredth, a far cry from the "trapped" and "hopeless" bunch who had seen the briefing room map with dismayed eyes that morning, now played an inspiring part in the furtherance of the destruction of the Reich capital. . . .

"Despite the determined opposition from air and ground forces, the primary target was reached and a telling blow was delivered to factories producing one-half the ball bearings required by the German Air Force. The courageous men of the 100th Bombardment Group (H) destroyed seven of the attacking enemy fighters, probably destroyed two and damaged three others."

The attacks began at 1259 hours, and compared to the attacks suffered by the 45th Wing, the Hundredth received comparatively light treatment. The gunners were sharp and their aim good. . . . S/Sgt. E. Morgan saw his target go down spinning. . . . Lt. Kizak caught an FW-190, S/Sgt. J. Kyrc an ME-109. . . . Lt. J. Johnson and Lt. C. Milburn hit their targets. . . . S/Sgt. L. Johnson fired and then saw the enemy pilot bail out. . . . T/Sgt. C. Hall shot down an FW 190, while S/Sgt W. Moreland and S/Sgt. W. Wright racked up Probably Destroyed FW 190's. . . .

"The officers and enlisted men of the 100th Bombardment Group (H) displayed extraordinary heroism and tenacity of purpose in successfully completing these important operations against the enemy's capital despite extremely adverse weather conditions and the concentrated defenses of a powerful, well-armed foe. Their conspicuous gallantry, determination, and esprit de corps reflect the highest credit on themselves and the Army Air Forces."

BY ORDER OF THE SECRETARY OF WAR:
G. C. Marshall
Chief of Staff

Success over Berlin had been bought dearly. 170 men were listed as Missing in Action over the capital in the three combat operations. Men had been lost from every corner of the land. . . . Men from Tacoma, Washington and Brooklyn, New York . . . from Glendale, California, and Manchester, New Hampshire . . . from Creighton, Nebraska and Oshkosh, Wisconsin. . . .

There were farming men from Virginia City, Nevada and office men from Cleveland, Ohio. . . . They had left their earth and pavement . . . their open spaces and their fenced in cities . . . their dungarees and their sports slacks. . . . They had teamed their Georgia accents . . . their Brooklyn accents . . . their work . . . and their lives. . . .

It is said, with a great deal of truth, that soldiers are heavy drinkers. It is sometimes understandable. Men continued to take their passes and their flak leaves, heading for the big towns. It was during the aftermath of one of these missions that a lieutenant from the Hundredth was entertaining guests in the lobby of a London hotel. He had sopped up about eight drinks too many, and was feeling higher than an anoxia victim. At this precise moment, a stern, austere, full-eagled colonel strode through the lobby. He confronted the potted one.

"Lieutenant," he said. "You are making a spec-

tacle of yourself. I recommend that you retire to your quarters."

The lieutenant squared back with a sway and a hic, and replied: "Colonel, yesterday, at noon, I was over Berlin. Where in hell were you?"

The eagles retreated in haste.

The war blasted on across the world. . . . March saw the bloody story of the Anzio beachhead hit the headlines. . . . Bitter fighting in Italy also centered at Cassino. . . . The Red Army captured the Black Sea port of Kherson, and in the Pacific, American Naval bombers hit the Carolines. . . .

It was dark the morning of March 30, and a mission was scheduled to strike at Ludwigshafen. The runway lights were on in anticipation of the PFF (Pathfinder) arrival. Personnel of the base were suddenly jarred from their beds. Airmen who had just been briefed felt the ground quake under their feet, and the mechanics on the line, closest to the blast, hugged the good earth.

A Junkers 88 had slipped in, dropped two 500 Kgs bombs, and slipped off into the dawn. The base was a mêlange of confusion and bewildered curses. One of the bombs struck the edge of Runway 28, the only runway in operation. There was feverish activity as the base awoke to the realization of what had occurred. The runway was soon cleared of debris by a small army of men, and the aircraft took off on time despite the German-inspired excavation project.

Next day, as the men formed the pay line and poured their shillings and pound into the Prisoner-of-War Fund, the bombing was still the main topic of conversation, and "bomb bores" cropped up by the handful.

The PW drive, aided and abetted by party, dance and raffle, managed to accumulate well over fifteen hundred pounds. When it was considered that the quota for the entire division was twenty-five hundred pounds, the Hundredth effort was deserving of numerous commendations.

In April, Col. Neil "Chick" Harding left to assume a wing command. Maj. William H. Utley, a lanky, drawling man from down south, reached the base and became the Ground Executive, replacing Maj. Karl Standish.

Col. Robert H. Kelly became Base Commander. Less than two weeks later, Kelly and Capt. W. Lakin led the group on a Noball mission to the rocket coast at Sottevast, on the Cherbourg peninsula.

The target was obscured, and it was decided to make a second bomb run. The Kraut gunners, having the range, sent up a skyful of their Flieger Abwehr Kanonen, which abbreviates to flak, and two planes went down. Col. Kelly's ship received two direct hits, one between the Number Two engine and the cockpit, the second in the tail section. It was reported to disintegrate without exploding. Going down with Kelly was the lead crew including Capt. "Bubbles" Payne, one of the top navigators of the group.

The second Fort, piloted by Lt. J. McGuire, had its Number One engine knocked from its mounting. The engine landed back on the wing, setting it afire, and as the plane dived away from the formation, the wing was observed to break off. The aircraft spiraled into the undercast.

The precise Lt. Col. John M. Bennett became acting Base Commander in addition to his Air Executive duties. On May 7, Lt. Col. Thomas S. Jeffrey, Jr. moved into the thriving hamlet of Thorpe Abbotts to assume command of the Hundredth. He was young and moved purposefully about the base, new broom in hand.

May 1944, and East Anglia tossed off its lethargic grays and donned more becoming tones of green. Good weather shot the group's monthly total of missions to nineteen, and four of these missions hit Berlin, where roomfuls of flak still exploded around the planes with the big "D" on the tail.

On May 7, Lt. F. Kincannon, flying a plane on two engines and escorted by a P-47, staggered back from Berlin after flak had all but destroyed the plane.

With the advent of longer days, it became feasible to dispatch an occasional double mission. On May 8, eighteen aircraft attacked Berlin in the A.M., and six aircraft hit a Noball target at La Glacerie in the P.M. Lt. D. Riggle did not return from the Big Town.

After losing Lt. J. Hunter and his crew at Liége, Belgium, on the 11th, the group set out for Brux, Czechoslovakia, with Maj. Fuller and Lts. F. Robertson and R. South in the lead crew. Bombs were dropped on the oil refinery, and huge fires and black smoke billowed up to 10,000 feet. Two aircraft, Lts. J. Moore and A. Kinder, were lost due to flak. Bombing was considered excellent.

Lt. Col. Jeffrey led the group to Berlin on May 19, with Capt. R. Rosenthal flying the number two spot. The Hundredth led the wing, and bombs were poured into the center of the city in compact patterns that covered heavily built-up areas within one thousand yards of the MPI. As the group headed for home, enemy aircraft were first seen in a formation of 25, flying parallel to the course that the Hundredth was


BASE THEATRE


JAN. 1945


TAXI CRASH 21-12-43


PULHAM HANGAR (RAF)


BATTLE DAMAGE 4-1-45

on. They were out of range and gradually pulled ahead, getting into position for an attack.

Their formation was suddenly broken up by a pair of P-51's that dived into them, scattering the German fighters into the path of the Hundredth.

In the ensuing fifteen minutes, the Germans lost ten FW 190's, while Lts. R. Horne, M. Ruppert and J. Rogers were shot down from the ranks of the group.

Lt. B. Barfield, S/Sgts. W. McNally, J. Townsend, C. Anderson, A. Trigg, R. Mathiasen, W. Barrack, C. Slaght and T/Sgts. L. Bailie and G. Williamson racked up kills. . . .

Five days later, Berlin was 10/10 cloud, except for one small hole over the center of the city. Lt. Col. Ollen Turner led the "A" Group with Capt. J. Swartout, while Lt. E. Ferbrache was out in front of the high squadron. Maj. M. Fitzgerald and Capt. J. Geary topped "B" Group, with Neal Scott and E. Williams on high. . . .

Forty FW 190's blew into the picture at 1030 hours, and made a mass attack on the low squadron. There was a sharp session of give and take, and four bombers dropped. . . . Lts. M. Hoskinson, C. Johnson, F. Malooly and R. Roeder. . . . The planes spun into the undercast as the remainder of the formation headed on to the target. Bombs were released through the hole in the clouds and the planes turned off. The flak became rough, and big chunks of the stuff laced the aircraft. . . .

A shower of lead hit the "B" lead aircraft, and bombardier Lt. A. E. Stern was suddenly aware that a flak chunk had lodged in his bombsight, chest-high, and that he did not have on a flak suit. He immediately decided that the situation was not very much to his liking. At this time, navigator Dort Payne pounded him on the back. Stern shook off his hand without turning around, and Payne shifted the attack to the head.

"I pressed my interphone button to tell him to lay off," Stern said later, "but not a sound was broadcast. Payne beat me on the head again. I turned around madder than a P-38 pilot and panting like a Bessemer furnace. He handed me a note written in a hurried scrawl . . . 'Your interphone and oxygen lines have been shot out.' . . . I grabbed the large walkaround bottle, but it was decorated by a neat flak hole. Payne handed me the small one. The refill line was out of order, and as the meter on my bottle was fast reaching zero, I breathlessly clambered into the cockpit.

"Fitzgerald was sucking oxygen from a small walkaround bottle, and refilling from Geary's line. We were scared, and I refilled. I then squirmed through the bomb bay into the radio room. Domenig, the left waist gunner, had caught a flak fragment in the forehead, and Trout, the right waist man, had administered a bandage. I told Paltrineri, the radio man, to call Trout into the radio room, where I could use his oxygen line. He came in and I used it, then stumbled into the waist. I connected the interphone, and heard Payne say: 'Fighters at one o'clock level!'

"All the forward guns started working. . . . Schuster in the ball and Harris in the tail also let fly. In the meanwhile, flak had knocked out the manual controls, and Geary put the ship on A.F.C.E. We were all by ourselves and the sky was swarming with FW 190's. . . ."

Hundredth gunners were locked in combat with the Krauts. . . . S/Sgt. W. McNally clipped three and probably destroyed a fourth. . . . S/Sgt. F. Swartz got a pair . . . and single fighters were destroyed by S/Sgts. R. Rodriguez, G. Langdon, C. Slaght and Lts. P. Lollis and D. Bailey. . . . Engines flashed and belched flame, then spearheaded the earthward plunge. . . . Lts. E. Siewert, L. Williamson, D. Pearson, and H. Jesperson went down. . . .

"There was a yell of 'Help! Radio room!' over the intercom," Stern continued. "My two German chums had scooted around to six o'clock, so I hooked into a walkaround bottle and accepted the invitation. A couple of 20mm's had made a lace curtain of the place. Trout's face was covered with blood and Paltrineri was holding his leg, yelling 'Take care of him first!' After I wiped the blood away, I found that Trout had been hit on the bridge of his nose. I stuck a sulpha bandage on, and he held it in place. . . . There were small 20mm fragments peppered over Paltrineri's thigh, but he was all right. I was out of breath and feeling faint.

"Back in the waist, the noise was unbearable. The engines were beating themselves to death, and the chatter of the guns was deafening. The gun-smoke in the ship was heavy, and the smell of burnt powder was nauseating. After many passes, Number Three engine had been set on fire. The situation was like some fantastic nightmare.

"Engineer Acker and Paltrineri were fighting the fire, which had spread to the bomb bay. Their efforts were useless. I was busy with our chums outside. The ball turret was jarring the floor with its incessant firing. The noise grew louder, the smoke thicker. I was going to vomit. I never did.

"Trout and Paltrineri came out of the radio room

with their chutes on. 'Pilot says Jump!' Paltrineri yelled. They kicked out the waist door and left, with Domenig following. Schuster was still in the ball firing. He poked his head out and said: 'O. K. if I come out now?'

'Hell yes,' I replied. 'Get your butt out that door.'

"He went. The plane was thick with smoke, and the engines were beating on my eardrums. I hurtled through the door.

"The slipstream caught me and bounced me around for about five seconds. Then it was smooth, like hanging in space. There was no sense of falling. It was cold and quiet . . . deathly quiet. We had bailed out at over twenty thousand feet. I saw three open 'chutes, and that old query of 'will this thing open?' raced through my mind.

"I pulled hard on the ripcord, and thought I ran into a Mack truck. The shock of the 'chute opening tore at my chest muscles and groin. I was laughing hysterically like a madman in a second-rate thriller, and couldn't stop. I tore off my oxygen mask and took a deep breath of cold, fresh air. I felt better, and looked down.

"I seemed to be coming down right on top of a Luftwaffe base. . . . As I fell closer to earth, I began to drift past the airbase to a small railroad station. A train was about to pull out, and the dire thought that I might land on the track and be crushed fleeted through my confused mind.

"I passed the train and headed for the woods. When you are high up, it seems as though you are barely moving . . . but the closer you get to terra firma, the faster you seem to be falling. At one hundred feet, the ground is really moving up at you. Luckily, I went between two trees. My 'chute caught the top of a tree, and left me dangling about three feet in the air. The place was full of people yelling and dogs barking. I swung back and forth until I could wrap my legs around a tree. I shinnied up, undid the clasps and dropped to the ground. . . ."

At 1507 hours, the decimated formations of the Hundredth were back over the base, circled, and bounced in one by one. It had been a rough one. . . .

The air war was costly and high in battle casualty reports, but as the climax approached, every raid helped to further the destruction of the Nazi war potential. The bombers left their bases day after day on their rounds of extermination, and men wondered and fretted about the invasion . . . or lack of one.

The invasion secret was well kept, and even as Second Front rallies were held in other parts of the globe, men were already learning the intricacies of waterproofing, the tactics of landing on a defended beach and the tricks of assault.

Then, when the plan had been pored over again and again, when every piece of equipment, every order, every map . . . was perfect, the military pilgrimmage to the south began, and lengthy columns of shielded headlights picked their way to the coast. . . .

The evening of June 5, 1944, did not seem different from any other evening, except that some men considered the weather unusual. It was warm and springy, and the armament and ordnance men were called out rather early. It was still daylight when they finished snapping the bombs into their stations, fuzed them and closed the bomb bay doors. Then they headed back to the Red X for their interrupted cup of coffee.

In the June days prior to the sixth, the Hundredth had hit shore defenses at Boulogne three times, as well as a railway bridge at Abbeville and a rail junction in Paris. On the morning of the sixth, precautions seemed a bit more tightly drawn. Radio men safetied equipment to insure complete security.

The weather was bad as the men filled the briefing room. The Hundredth waited for information of its part in the fulfillment of one of the great moments in history.

The road taken at Boise, Idaho, on October 27, 1942, had been a long and bloody one. The rows of Hundredth Bomb Group men interred at Cambridge testified to the strength and fanaticism of the enemy.

The group had struck more than 130 blows at the enemy, which had cost more than 100 crews. The gunners had taken a toll of better than 200 enemy aircraft. From a green outfit which had flown its initial mission less than one year before, the "Bloody Hundredth" had long since come of age. . . .

Now, the men felt that something big was in the making, and the magic word "Invasion" sent the room into turmoil. A secret message was read:

"The Eighth Air Force is currently charged with a most solemn obligation in support of the most vital operation ever undertaken by our armed forces. It will be necessary during certain stages to attack with tremendous intensity the area immediately in front of our advancing troops. Because of the intensity required, no other agency except the Eighth Air Force can undertake this task. The required materials and skills are ours, yet it must be recognized that bom-

bardment accuracy has never faced a more severe test. Every individual keenness, every refinement of technique, and every aid to accuracy must be exploited so that the pattern of our attack is exactly as ordered, and that there are no gross or avoidable errors to bring disaster to our troops on the ground. The necessary hazards have been accepted. They can be minimized only through exalted performance on the part of our air leaders and bombardiers. I have every confidence in you."

The message had been sent over the names of Generals Doolittle and LeMay. . . .

Confidence was not misplaced as the Hundredth took off on three separate occasions that momentous day. The first mission, led by Lt. Col. Jeffrey and Capt. S. Clark, Capts. A. Gorski, C. Harris, F. Kincannon, R. Helmick, Lt. M. Ehorn, Lt. J. Noble, Majors S. Reeder and C. Emberson, took off into the darkness of 0325 hours, June 6, 1944 . . . and it was 2203 hours when the last planes of the third mission circled the field.

The Hundredth flew 78 sorties on D-Day. The second mission failed to drop bombs, but the third, led by Capts. R. Rosenthal, S. Clark, J. Zeller and Lt. J. Noble, smacked the target.

The airmen strained to see the channel through the layers of cloud. Far beneath them, thousands of landing craft and supply ships blanketed the water. The targets for the day were Ouistreham and Falaise, and bombs fell as the assault waves landed on French soil. Medical corpsmen from the base at Thorpe Abbotts were also in on the invasion. Capt. T. Poremski, S/Sgt. S. Barrett, Sgt. Rogers and Pfc. J. Wylie had been placed on detached service and transferred to work on the invasion barges.

The years of planning and fighting were now beginning to pay off. The Allies were in Normandy. They held the bridgehead, moved ahead by feet . . . yards . . . then the Americans broke loose and raced miles into France. The air war raged ahead and above the ground war.

The Hundredth blasted important bridges at Nantes and Tours. Shore defenses had been hit at Berck sur Mer, and an airfield at Rosieres received rough treatment. D-Day plus 6, and the beaches of Omaha and Utah were joined by the capture of Carentan. . . .

In Moscow, Marshal Stalin issued a statement: "The history of war records no other undertaking so immense in its conception, so grand in scale and so masterfully executed."

The Germans had perfected what they considered a deck of aces up their scientific sleeves, and began to propel hundreds of pilotless planes toward England. The putt-putt of their engines and the eerie exhaust light at their tail gave warning of a "Buzz-Bomb" approach. Strict secrecy was clamped on Britain, and it proved to be months before the rest of the world found out that London had once again been under fierce attack.

Although the aerial spotlight was on tactical bombing during the days of landing, the strategic end was not overlooked. Excellent results were obtained by bombardiers H. Skelton and A. Holtz in a raid on Fallersleben. This plant, struck on June 20, was the final testing ground for all armored vehicles and tanks produced in Germany.

When Lt. Col. Jeffrey led 28 planes of the Hundredth away from the base at 0519 hours the morning of June 21, 1944, the formation was not to return for two weeks. Auxiliary gas tanks nestled in the bomb bay. 20 of the aircraft carried one passenger each.

The group was blazing another shuttle trail, this time to the Soviet Union. The target on the initial leg was Ruhland, and Capt. R. South, lead bombardier, released his load with good effect upon the synthetic oil plant, which was already burning from previous bombing. The formations continued on across Poland. . . .

As the planes were passing the town of Biala-Podlaska at 1245 hours, six ME 109's suddenly attacked the wing. Escorting P-51's turned to give battle, and in a quick, sharp struggle, shot down a pair of the German fighters. The rest scooted off.

The aircraft passed into Russia. Small villages, dwarfed by the vastness of the surrounding spaces, looked up at the silver formations. This was Mother Russia, once again embroiled in the battle against aggression. The heritage of the land, dating from the days when Alexander Nevsky had hurled the Teutonic legions into icy waters, into the days of Napoleon and his rout before Moscow, and on to the current struggle against the Nazi hordes, was a story of intense patriotism.

The formations passed the towers of Kiev at 1513 hours, and less than two hours later, the lead ship set down at the Russian base near Mirgorod. There were the effusive Russian greetings to a welcome ally, and the men were showered with flowers and smiles by the many girls working on the base.

The men, especially the passengers unaccustomed to lengthy, high altitude flights, were weary. When the planes landed, there was the inevitable work to be

completed. Major Marvin S. Bowman, the S-2 chief, had flown with the lead ship. The photo men had strike photos to worry about. Major Eugene Rovegno, who had flown with Magee Fuller and Kincannon, was busy with his flight chiefs, M/Sgts. Strain, Gentry, Warfield and Picard. The armament heads, M/Sgts. Swank and Booth, checked on the guns.

The lead ship, which had not neglected to take along a goodly shipment of whiskey, now disgorged its load, and the men queued up for their ration.

The men and their planes remained in Russia until June 26, making friends and doling out sweets and candy to the Russian youngsters.

The long-range importance of the shuttle raid could not be underestimated. In the words of the announcement made fro mRussia, "Shuttle raids place any given point in Germany or her satellites within reach of the Allied Air Forces."

Nineteen aircraft left Russian soil at 1215 on June 26, flying as the main body of the Hundredth, while six aircraft left in a composite group with the 95th bombers. Lead navigators W. Dishion and G. Peterson led the way to Italy, as Jeff and Clark once again piloted the group to Drohobycz, Poland, where another oil refinery was bombed. Crew members reported voluminous smoke and flames shooting high into the air.

Flak over the target was accurate, and the lead aircraft of the high squadron, flown by Capt. F. Mason and Lt. M. Ehorn, was struck and forced to feather Number Two engine. The plane fell behind the formation and followed the group under fighter protection until the Wing let down to 15,000 feet, after which the plane rejoined the formation and landed safely at the Italian base of Foggia.

From Italy, the Hundredth led the 13th Combat Wing, which led the Eighth Air Force in an attack on a marshalling yard at Arad, Rumania, on July 3. Hits were scored on the assigned target and also on a locomotive works, which was the assigned target of another group.

This latter group missed the target completely, and Capt. R. Nance, the Hundredth lead bombardier, by using an alternate aiming point, managed to assure that bombs of the Hundredth struck both targets.

The group returned at 1433 hours to the Italian base at Foggia, and two days later, July 5, took off on the final leg home. Their work had still not been completed. A marshalling yard at Beziers, France, was still operating.

The weather was flawless and the bomb run very good. Crew members reported that the yard was solidly hit.

As the aircraft turned from the target, the men sighed with relief. It had been a tough grind, and they were elated that the next stop was to be Thorpe Abbotts. Four superior operations had been carried out under difficult supply and maintenance conditions.

As the planes hit England and came in over the base, lead navigator W. Dishion, who had guided the outfit across the unfamiliar terrain of Russia and Italy, scrawled the final air speed figure into his log and followed it with the words "Home at last." The men echoed his sentiments. . . .

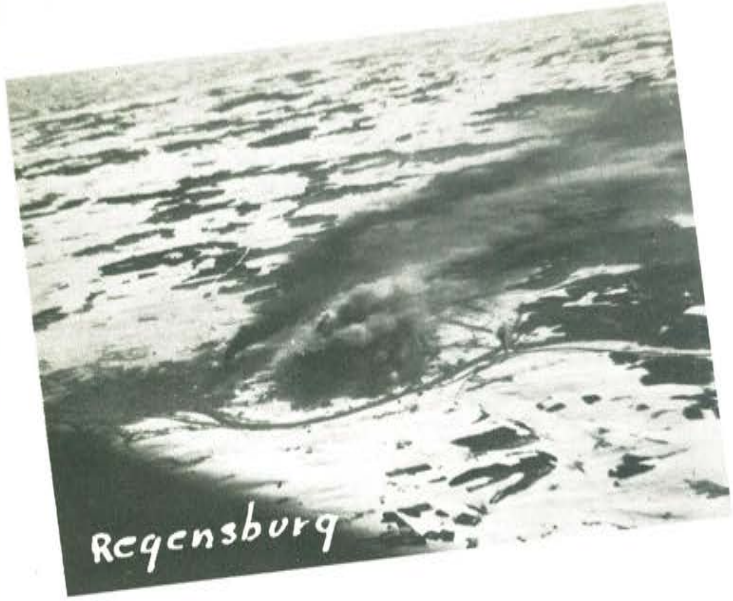
The returning airmen found that the planes remaining at Thorpe Abbotts when they left had not been idle. Six missions had been flown against German and French targets in their absence by the smaller remaining formations. Supplies had been dropped to the Maquis in Southern France on June 25, and Bohlen had been attacked on the 29th.

As the war raged into July 1944, St. Lo fell and Adolph frantically began juggling his Junkers generals, none of whom passed the stern test of GI, British and Canadian firepower. The air force kept up the pounding, the Hundredth hitting bridges and junctions at Le Lente . . . Bourth . . . Auxerre . . . snarling the German lines into scrap metal and heaping impossible tasks on their services of supply. . . . Three deeper penetrations were made in raids on Munich, where jet-propelled engine plants were plastered. . . .

The word Merseburg became a word of death in July. This was the roughest flak target in Europe, where the legendary marksmanship of the area Hun guns was translated into dark reality. It was an area to be avoided, but it was an area that made oil, and oil made modern warfare. . . .

Aerial attacks against the German oil industry had been highly successful. By June 1, 1944, the persistent raids of the 15th Air Force had rendered most Roumanian oil refineries inoperative. The Eighth Air Force had meanwhile creamed ten out of the fourteen Bergius Process (making aviation gasoline) Synthetic Oil Plants, as well as three of the nine Fischer Tropsch Process (producing lower grade oils) Synthetic Oil Plants. Northern German refineries at Misburg, Hamburg, Ostermoor and Emmerich had been bombed out of business. The output of synthetic oil had been reduced 60 percent between June 15th and July 15th.

The Germans had given gasoline production the highest priority of all fuel production. Intelligence sources reported that fuel shortages on all battlefronts were reaching the serious stage. The oil at Merseburg


Regensburg


Supplies over Warsaw
Sept. 18, 1944


Egypt


Kiev Opera House


Russian women workers


GI Joe meets
GI Ivan


Spoils of
war


Russian
Fighter-Bombers

was high on the Joint Allied Oil Committee's priority list. The plant, after having been crippled once before, was expected to be back in full production by the end of August. Part of the cost of putting a crimp into Kraut plans were one hundred and twelve men in twelve fortresses lost by the Hundredth in the three missions. . . .

Magee Fuller and Kincannon led the first one, but did not return. Flak was accurate and full on the lead ship, which went down over the target. . . . Eight days later, on July 28, Maj. C. Emberson and Lt. G. Fory were out in front of the Hundredth formation. Flak, to quote the line that was routine in Merseburg reports, was "intense and accurate." Capt. F. Mason and Lt. Noble, flying lead in "B" Group, were found by the flak, which started fires in Number Three engine and in the waist. The plane headed south as men abandoned ship. . . .

At 1235 hours, Lt. A. Spear, flying Number 7 position of low squadron, pulled up climbing and caught the vertical fin against Lt. W. Stansbury in Number 5 position. Spear's ship broke in half and plunged into the undercast, as Stansbury also went into a steep dive. . . .

On July 29, the Mersburg skies were black and puffy with flak. The group lost eight ships, as enemy fighters teamed up with the flak. One crew observed that the FW 190's and ME 109's were flying in their own flak. It was believed that the Krauts in the air were radioing the correct altitude of the bomber formations to the gunners below. The teamwork was destructive, as the fighters turned from the larger formations and attacked stragglers who had been damaged by the flak. Capts. A. Dunlap and H. Howard led the lead squadron, while Capts. J. Zeller and C. Harris led "B" Group, which creamed the refinery area. . . . Lt. J. Dimel was lead bombardier for this dropping operation.

The lead group was hard hit, losing five out of six in the low squadron. . . . Lts. W. Fitzroy and J. Phelps . . . E. Jones . . . C. Gustafson and M. Clark. . . . The high squadron lead, G. Steussy, went down, and two low squadron ships from "B," R. Schomp and W. Greiner, were lost. . . .

The well-advertised "Hell over Merseburg" was no myth. . . .

On July 24, 1944, a road near St. Lo separated the 5th and 19th U. S. Army Corps of the 1st Army from the Germans. Less than a week earlier, bombers had successfully blasted a corridor 4,000 yards wide in the German lines southeast of Caen, and now, orders came through for an aerial operation against the German lines facing the 1st Army.

The Hundredth tried on July 24, but heavy undercast forced the formation to bring the bombs back. . . . The orders were repeated the following day, and the crews again were briefed on the necessity for pin-point accuracy and timing.

The planes took off at 0930 hours, with Maj. "Rosie" Rosenthal and Lt. M. Ehorn leading the group and Third Division. Clouds and haze forced the aircraft down to 12,000 feet as the target area was approached.

Americans and Germans waited below, and the men in the sky peered intently for the red smoke which was to mark off the northern boundary of the troop area at two-minute intervals from zero minus 5 to zero plus 50. Target time was set at zero plus 20, or 1022 hours.

The American troops had withdrawn from their forward lines to a point 1500 yards north of the target area. The aircraft, flying low, attracted flak from automatic weapons as well as from 88mm guns.

There was haze and death waiting. There was smoke on the ground, and Lt. G. Morgan, lead bombardier, held his bombs, fearing to drop short. "B" and "C" Groups released at 1020 hours, while Morgan released one minute later into the German rear.

The frag bombs dropped into the haze as the Hundredth turned from the target, many fearing that bombs had fallen into American ranks. A burst of flak caught the Number Two engine of Lt. L. Townsend, and smoke poured out. The entire crew was seen to leave the stricken ship.

Arguments concerning the bombing continued as strike photos showed "B" and "C" bombs on the American side of the road. However, Eighth Air Force Headquarters came through with information clearing the group, although bombs *had* fallen into the danger zone.

Later reports said: "The troops were undoubtedly given the impetus to make the breakthrough."

On July 31, Lt. Col. Kidd led a mission to Munich. Flying with Lt. H. Bethea in the low squadron lead ship, bombardier Tom McKenzie was wounded by a flak burst which cut jaggedly through the nose. A second burst entered and struck McKenzie. His oxygen supply leaking, the bombardier hung on and dropped his load at the proper time, then passed out from his wounds.

The oxygen supply went out completely in the front of the ship. It was impossible to move the wounded man, and T/Sgts. Hellen and R. Vance

acted quickly. They removed all the hoses from spare oxygen bottles, and connecting them end to end, enabled the bombardier to breathe the oxygen from the aft part of the ship.

In August, tanks broke out of Normandy and headed for the Seine. The retreating enemy did a thorough job of destruction, and it was left to the engineers to rebuild in a hurry. They did.

The Allied forces on the Continent now numbered 2,000,000, and air transport aided the supply problem by depositing 500 tons per day on French landing strips. There was no let-up through the air lanes.

The Hundredth was credited with seventeen missions, ranging from a shot at the stubborn garrison at Brest to an oil refinery in Rühland. Results were excellent at Troyes and Magdeburg, Villacoublay and Ruhland . . . as lead bombardiers B. Fox, G. Morgan, J. Dimel, F. Rubick, H. Skelton and T. Barrett carefully placed their bombs on the assigned targets.

The price was 45 men lost over enemy territory, as the planes of Lts. B. Scott, A. Gallagher, J. Keys, A. Aske and D. Cielewich were downed. . . .

Over St. Silvain on August 8, the Hundredth, led by Jeffrey and Neal P. Scott, flew again in support of the ground forces. The target was the Headquarters for the battalions forming the nucleus of the enemy's defense.

The operation in its larger scope was designed to aid the attempt of the British and Canadians to crush the hedge-hog defenses of the enemy in the Caen sector, which held up a push to the south.

The R.A.F. was slated to soften up five targets for an advance, after which the Eighth Air Force would attack prior to the final break-through.

During the accurate German anti-aircraft fire, the flak that caught J. Keys' ship also wounded co-pilot Lt. E. Lindsay, flying with C. Streed; S/Sgt. C. Wilson, tail gunner with Lt. A. Trommer; Lt. R. Bayer, navigator with G. Brown; and Lt. Fred Chapin, group lead bombardier. . . .

Chapin, wounded in the leg, nevertheless aimed and saw his bombs burst in the target area. . . .

On August 15, 1500 ships deposited men on the beaches of Southern France, and the new 7th Army poured into battle. French Forces of the Interior joined up and helped roll the Germans back to their mystic Rhine, where the spirit of Wotan failed the Nazi hordes. . . .

Paris fell to the Free French on August 25, and the army of liberation was soon rolling through the spacious streets, grinning at the frenzied accolades of a frantically happy people.

Back at Thorpe Abbotts, men still sweat them out, from alert to loading to mission to return, a seemingly never-ending circle of warfare work. Sub-Depot men built up the engines, engineering men changed them.

There were staff officer changes. Lt. Col. F. E. Price came in at the end of July as Air Executive. Maj. William Thompson took over from Lt. Col. Kidd as Operations Officer in the middle of August.

Work was interspersed with an occasional Hokie-Pokie at the neighborhood Dickleburgh dances. The fish and chips wagon did a land office business, and the Church Army tea wagon from Norwich travelled up and down the line with unvaried route and bill of fare.

In Norwich itself, the Samson and Hercules Dance Hall, once battered by bombing, was again beckoning off Tombland Alley, and men flocked through the newly-daubed doors. Since the hall was populated largely by gentlemen of rank, the enlisted men preferred going further afield, to where the Lido welcomed only those not clad in fashionable pinks.

The preoccupation of Yank youths with lasses of the isle inevitably led to many things, the most notable of these being the marital state. The Anglophobes of the Hundredth were loud in their opinions of the "Limies," but this did not deter purposeful men from firmly cementing relations with large numbers and sterling examples of English womanhood.

As August closed, over-optimism took hold of the Allied world. Things had been going too well. Even the cautious Montgomery took time out from tracking the Hun to predict the end of the war. Back in the States, war workers began to drift from the factories, and wishful thinking replaced the necessary perspective of objectivity. Industrialists began to specialize in blueprints for post-war conversion.

Potential shortages in artillery shells became a reality. Tires wore out, and their replacement was slow. The Nazi war machine, depleted by 400,000 men since D-Day, sat behind the Siegfried Line, while strong garrisons still manned Le Havre and Calais, keeping the Allies from using the great port of Antwerp.

On September 11, the Hundredth slugged it out

in another bloody battle with the Luftwaffe. The skies over Ruhland were cloudy as Maj. M. Youngs and Lt. G. Fory led the three formations of the group in another attack on the oil refinery. Lts. N. Scott and L. Roediger led "B" Group, while Capt. J. Giles and Lt. J. Shelly led "C" Group.

As the target area was neared, forty enemy fighters swarmed into the trailing group of twelve planes. For five minutes that seemed a hideous eternity . . . wings exploded . . . ships flared into red and orange and black smoke . . . and the entire low squadron of 350th Squadron aircraft was destroyed. . . .

Gunners of the group valiantly struggled against the quick, darting fighters . . . shooting down sixteen, probably destroying ten and damaging four. . . .

In the lead elements, Giles, J. Raine, A. Trommer, H. Taylor, H. Schulte and P. Corley went down. . . . In the low, W. Carlton, H. Holladay and L. Riegel went down. . . . In the high, C. Baker and O. Everitt went down. . . .

Lt. R. Heironimus called and informed the base that he was heading for Paris with 75 gallons of gas left in the severely damaged plane. He crash-landed in France. . . .

The remaining planes of the group returned home with holes and tales of the furious struggle.

Two other aircraft were lost during the month. . . . On Sept. 3, Lt. J. David was lost, and in a Merseburg mission on the 28th, Lt. R. Harney failed to return. . . .

A bitter engagement flared up inside Warsaw, where a premature and ill-timed uprising held out against far superior German opposition. The Red Army had been stopped some twelve miles from the city, and the plight of the Warsaw defenders grew more desperate by the hour.

On September 18, 1944, Col. Jeffrey led the 13th "B" Combat Wing in a mission of aid. It was to be another lengthy shuttle job, and the men had been briefed across Poland and once more to the Soviet Union. The planes were loaded with food and equipment containers.

Signals in the forms of white lines 100 yards in length were to be displayed on the streets or roof tops to facilitate accurate dropping. 34 planes of the Hundredth turned over Warsaw at 1231 hours. Flak spread along the route in ugly, puffy patterns.

The formations flew at 17,000 feet, and through breaks in the undercast, the battered city of Warsaw was spread in its drab, wartorn garments. The formation was tight above the target area, Maj. C. Emberson and Lt. J. Seamans leading "B" Group, and Maj. S. Barr and Lt. L. Roediger leading "C" Group.

At 1241 hours, the containers were dropped, and the parachutes attached billowed out behind them. Food and supplies floated down into Warsaw, and the formations continued on their eastward course as the defenders of the city collected the containers of sustenance dropped on the Central Station . . . the Mokotow area at incredibly-spelt Niepodleglosci Alley . . . and the Zoliborz area, pin-pointed at Wilson Place.

The formations, their mission for the day accomplished, continued on across Poland and into the Soviet Union. The afternoon sun was high and glinted from the wings of the tightly packed units. The planes descended to 14,000 feet, then dropped to 9,000. The flat plains of brown and green slowly swung into focus, then were replaced by other plains of brown and green. Scorched earth was in evidence, as well as dismal stretches of marshland.

The autumn sun was low as the planes approached Mirgorod. The town was strung out along the main road. Rooftops glittered in the waning light as the planes circled the field, peeled off and made their approaches to the metal landing strips. They bounced in, settled down, and pulled off the runway, parking in scattered groups along the sides of the strip.

The men were once more welcomed by the Russians who drove up in lease-lend equipment. The billets were in the town itself, and the men hopped into trucks, which wound their way into Mirgorod. They stopped before a large building off the main street. The absence of glass in the windows bore draughty evidence of recent German bombings. The wrecked German tanks along the road gave mute testimony of the warfare that had raged around and in the town.

There was a deep-seated hatred in the Russian people for the Hun. They let the men know about it. The smiles and clenched fist salutes were reserved for their American allies, who had entered the town hungry.

After billets were assigned, they headed for chow, where they were greeted by the usual mess set-up, except that the K. P.'s were comely, buxom girls. Service was with a smile, and large helpings forced on the not unwilling men. Officers and enlisted men clipped a page from Red Army tradition and ate together.

Before the food had been dished out, each man received one or more large shots of Old Overholt. After the whiskey and food had been consumed, routine reports were completed and submitted.

There was a pilots meeting, where Jeff told that there would be a take-off the following day. All men were notified, after which most of them strolled through the town.

Dusk was slipping into night as the men headed through the earthen streets. The people were friendly and the children overjoyed at the candy which they had not seen since the last visit. The restaurants had food and the bars had vodka, which proved to be as potent as legend had it, and much more expensive. Quite a few of the Russians spoke English, and conversation flourished.

There were not many who stayed out late that night. There was a mission in the morning. The ground men who had flown along to service the planes were busy. Many of them worked all night patching up flak holes and engines, and by morning, all but two of the aircraft were ready for flight. Lts. T. Kemp and R. Cumming were supplied with alternate planes, and the next leg of the shuttle was pointed at the Italian boot.

Take-off was at 1041 hours, and the group and wing assemblies were completed over the base. The formations were the identical ones used on the initial leg. Col. Jeffrey and Capt. A. Dunlap led the procession, with Lts. N. Scott and J. Ernst as deputy.

The route was lined with clouds, and the formations skirted and climbed to the bombing altitude of 18,000 feet. The marshalling yards at Szolnok, Hungary, were filled with box cars and movement. Flak in the target area was inaccurate, and the planes pressed in with their loads of 240 KG Russian-type bombs.

Lead bombardiers B. Fox, R. Tunnicliff and W. Brice sighted through the haze. The group was below the briefed altitude due to heavy layers of middle clouds that were encountered from the Carpathian Mountains to the Yugoslav coast. The aiming point for the Hundredth was the southwest corner choke point of the yards. Bombs were released in salvo at 1505 hours and the formations headed for Yugoslavia as heavy bomb concentrations blossomed at the MPI.

The flak briefing in Russia had not warned about the large numbers of small though well-defended towns along the Balkan route. At the town of Brod, Yugoslavia, the Nazis tossed up intense tracking flak for almost four minutes, and metal ripped into the formation. No losses were sustained, however, and the outfit crossed the coast and sailed out over the Adriatic Sea. The water sparkled and reflected the blue of the sky, and it seemed incongruous to have dropped destruction into this late summer afternoon.

With lead navigators Capt. W. Dishion, Lts. R. Miller, J. Carpenter, B. King and G. Rhoades showing the way, the coast of Italy was reached and the planes let down. Olive groves were spread and neatly spaced in their green finery as the formation approached Foggia.

The base was surrounded by groves, and the planes landed without incident. Trucks brought the men into what was once an Italian village. It had been converted into an all-American base, although many of the ancient buildings and streets still retained their Romanesque flavor.

Some sections, situated in what had obviously been barns back in more peaceful and fruitful times, put up with the odor that is uniquely reminiscent of barns.

After a brief interrogation, the men were assigned to tents . . . five men per. It was warm and pleasant, and the tents proved much less than a hardship. There were no passes that night, but the following day, men struck out for Naples and San Severa, while others remained local at Foggia itself.

Italian children brought up canteloupes, grapes, almonds, figs and much vino to exchange for cigarettes, candy and clothing. Barter was lively, loud and loquacious.

There were three days of indolence and passes, then flight once more as the formation dipped over the olive groves and headed across Italy, the Mediterranean and up through France. No bombs were carried this time, and the planes touched down at Thorpe Abbotts some ten hours later, having completed a historic link in the chain of explosions heard 'round the world.

They had successfully dropped supplies into Warsaw, had successfully bombed important rail yards at Szolnok, had crossed Denmark . . . Germany . . . the Baltics . . . Russia . . . Hungary . . . Yugoslavia . . . Italy . . . France . . . and cut back into England without the loss of a single crew.

When the aircraft returned, the men found the base in a turmoil of preparation. Lt. Col. Utley and his staff were neck-deep in plans for a huge affair commemorating the completion of 200 combat missions from Thorpe Abbotts. The plans were ambitious, but the planning party attacked them with the well-founded assumption that the best could hardly be sufficient for the men who had carried so great a share of the aerial burden which had all but broken the Nazi spine.

The Hundredth had been forged in battle, had slugged it out with the best that the Reich could offer, and had not been found wanting. The group had

visited the roughest and most important targets in Europe, and names like Regensburg . . . Berlin . . . Merseburg and Bremen conjured up pictures of flak and fighter-filled hells that were met and overcome. . . .

The group had more than its share of fabulous figures . . . men who flew the "big ones" in patterns not strictly cut from Army Regulation pages . . . whose deeds were not only heroic, but also triumphs of individuality and personality. . . . Men like gunner Jerry Ferroggiaro, who had fought his way through China and Spain . . . "Buck" Cleven . . . navigator "Big Pete" Peterson . . . bombardier Joe Armanini . . . "Rosie Rosenthal" . . . "Cowboy" Roane . . . Neal Scott . . . Frank Valesh. . . . The list was lengthy. . . .

There were men who would not show up to enjoy the fruits of celebration. Many planes lay strewn over charred stretches of Europe, their crews dead or living in prison camps. . . . Those who remained would not forget, and those back home *could* not forget. . . .

As the preparatory work for the party proceeded, the work of continuing the air offensive did not falter. Five missions were flown on the last six days of the month. One plane was lost to Merseburg flak on the 28th, as Lt. R. Harney fell back with two crippled engines near the target area.

Although far past the zenith, German power was still a threat, both in the air and on the ground. Their retreats had been orderly. They were being outsmarted, but still had sufficient reserves to make their power felt. The Wehrmacht waited behind the West Wall for an opening. . . .

Back on the base, the surroundings took on a festive air. Cooks and bakers labored hard and long. Out on the perimeter, strange shapes were rising, and pits were being dug. Contacts had been made for visitors and all was in readiness. The orange invitation cards read:

THE CENTURY BOMBERS
cordially invite you to attend a
200 MISSION FIESTA PARTY
AT THEIR BASE
on 30th September 1944
from 8 P. M. to ?

The question-mark anticipated the fact that days later, visitors were still being combed from the base.

September 30 dawned with stretches of gray streaking the sky. There had been a sudden late alert, a later bomb loading, and the planes took off at 0930 hours for a raid on an Ordnance dump at Bielefeld. It seemed ironic to many of the combat men to be going off to war from a field filled with the carnival spirit and more peaceful pursuits of the widely-arcing swings and the horses around the carousel.

There were rides and ice cream . . . hot dogs and cokes and side-shows. . . . The neighbors living around the base were out in full force and finery, while small children of every description had almost as good a time as the men of the group. Although Class "A" uniforms were optional, the men were bedecked in their Nissen-pressed olive drabs. The perimeter grew more crowded and more noisy, and trucks began to pull in laden with femme visitors from the WAAFS, WRENS, ATS and the civvie streets of Norwich, Diss and all the other towns and hamlets in the vicinity.

Some had dates but more did not. It did not matter too much, as the spirit of the occasion was sufficient to break down reserve. This breakdown was general and widespread.

The pace became accelerated with the afternoon, as games and races took the center of the stage on the perimeter. Finding a real needle in a bona-fide haystack was good for a quart, and the hay flew. . . . There was a mammoth tug-of-war contest, cycle races and broad-jumping duels.

Food was meanwhile being prepared in the outdoor mess hall, where a huge barbecue was in the making . . . meat cooked on grates slung over shallow pits, and smouldered by the hot and glowing coals. . . . More trucks pulled in after meeting London trains. . . .

A brief ceremony was held as visitor Gen. James Doolittle tendered a message of congratulation. . . . Then it was 1523 hours and the drone of engines filled the sky. Large formations passed overhead, crossing and criss-crossing in an abstract pattern of flight. Planes of the Hundredth, led by Maj. J. Wallace, Maj. J. Zeller, Lts. G. Fory and J. Seamans, came home without loss, and the combat men shook the war from their shoulders for a day and soon joined the general throng of merrymakers, who ate meat, drank bitters, had their cake and came back for more.

Nightfall heightened the tempo, as three dances tossed open their doors. The main event took place in the large hangar, where a closely-packed crowd swayed and marked time to the music of the Century Bombers Orchestra, with Mike Londra warbling into the public address system. The base band was augmented by a second one, The Flying Yanks, and those wishing a quick quaff between sets were fortunate in having numerous kegs of the stuff sitting around the hangar in strategic locations.

Later, a thin drizzle began to sift down, and

Front L. to R.: Lt. C. Milburn (Bomb.), Capt. C. Roesel (Nav.), Capt. L. Kimball (Nav.), Lt. W. Klinikowski (Nav.), Rear L. to R.: Lt. Singer (Radar), Capt. J. Anderson (Nav.), Capt. E. King (Nav.), Maj. H. Crosby (Nav.), Maj. D. Ventriss (BBomb.), Capt. R. Becker (Weather), Capt. C. Scott (Nav.), Capt. L. Raden (Nav.).

S/Sgt. J. Korman Lt. V. Haire Jr.
Maj. E. Wooten Lt. Roach

THE CENTURY BOMBERS

Front Row L. to R.: Cpl. J. Benedicto, T/Sgt. J. Anstett, Sgt. I. Waterbury, T/Sgt. E. Dolezal, Pfc. A. Woodgate, S/Sgt. E. Brubaker, Pfc. M. Londra, Sgt. V. Craft. Rear L. to R.: Pfc. L. Smith, Lt. P. Mitchell, T/Sgt. E. McCoy, Lt. G. Baker, Sgt. D. Helm, F/O D. Snow, Pfc. J. Jones, Sgt. R. Baker. Conductor: Capt. J. Williams.

L. to R.: Capt. A. Tong, Lt. G. Tussing, Capt. J. Krepismann, Capt. J. Ricker.

later still, the drizzle turned to rain. As the kegs emptied, people seemed to mind the rain less and less.

At eleven, the first trucks pulled up to carry off the small detachment of American WACs. Other trucks were announced over the speakers. Many of the guests were staying on the base overnight, and the Red Cross Aero Club had been converted into an M. P.-guarded hostel. It was never made clear whether the guards were there to keep the overly-curious Yank out or to keep some overly-intrepid female in.

As the rain became more insistent and night fell deeper into the hole, the final scene unreeled in the persons of a courageous trio of GI's who slowly and with infinite tenderness were coaxing a full keg of bitters down a muddy road to their barracks. . . . Fadeout. . . .

By morning, the rain had stopped, and the mess hall was almost empty. By dinner, mixed and famished lines strung out onto the roads. There were those who could not eat. There were those who rested. Then there were people who headed back for the carnival and the tea dance. The rumor that a mission was scheduled for the next morning kept many from tearing into another day of strenuous activity. By nightfall, the red light of a mission alert shone in front of the Orderly Rooms.

The war called a halt to the festivities, and the planes took off at 0740 hours on the morning of October 2 to attack an engine factory at Kassel.

The month saw 14 missions piled on. Two planes failed to get back. On the 6th, 34 planes of the group plastered Berlin. Maj. W. Thompson and Lt. J. Seamans led the formations at the head of the 13th Combat Wing.

The Berlin flak-gunners tossed up ugly bursts as the planes began the bombing run at 28,000 feet. It was as thick as a London pea-souper, but less yielding. Metal tore metal, and Lt. F. Reed's plane sustained a hit near the Number One and Two engines. The left wing was smashed free, and the tail section broke off near the waist. Parts spun and went down in flames.

Lt. W. Brice, Capt. A. Krezo and Lt. F. Theesfeld, the lead bombardiers, sighted and dropped. 165,000 pounds of explosive headed for the Spandau factory, where until the moment of impact, aircraft parts were being manufactured. All means and thoughts of production were blasted into nothingness as heavy concentrations smacked the target squarely on the Mean Point of Impact.

In an attack on a Bohlen oil refinery the following day, the group lost one aircraft. Lt. A. Grigg called on VHF 70 miles east of Holland and said that he had insufficient gasoline to reach England. Col. Harris, flying as group and wing commander, instructed him to attempt to reach Eindhoven. Grigg ended up as a guest of the Reich.

As the Hundredth was striking at Cologne and Kassel and Ludwigshafen, the 1st Army was driving into Germany, and on October 20, 1944, captured the first city in Germany. Aachen had been almost completely destroyed by the time the infantry took over. It was less a city than a mess of gutted dwellings and rubbled streets, but it heralded the beginning of the end. The few Germans left in town were extremely humble. The mantle of power had changed shoulders, and they bowed obsequiously to their conquerors under the cold autumn skies.

As November 1944 came in, the British press was beginning to predict the coldest winter in some 50 years. It was bad enough in Norfolk. What it meant on the bitter Western Front was beyond comprehension. The V-1 "Buzz-Bombs" sporadically visited the London scene, adding a fillip to the nights. The V-2 Rockets were launched and fell without warning and with deafening blasts, showering the streets with debris and flying glass. It did not seem to affect the number of men spending their furloughs and passes in the Big Town.

On November 2, the forbidding target of Merseburg was scheduled, and the fields of fanatical flak over the city had not thinned. Maj. S. Barr and Lt. P. Spurgeon led the group through the 8/10 undercast to the target. Bombing was PFF and the radar navigators, Lts. J. Maddox and M. Kretow, dropped their bombs through the flak from 27,000 feet after an accurate bomb run.

One well-placed flak burst exploded near the tail of Lt. D. Raiford's ship, instantly killing the young gunner, S/Sgt. P. Fitzimmons. . . . Another single fatality was scored on the mission of November 9th, when a pilot, Lt. L. Williams, was killed over Saarbrucken.

Two days prior to this mission, a practice outing had proceeded according to plan, and the ships flew out along the coastline. Suddenly, something happened to the ship flown by Lt. J. Dyatt. . . . Witnesses testified that the ship filled with one great sheet of flame and plunged, crashing into a British service barracks on the edge of a small town. Dyatt, T/Sgt. D. Gustavson and a passenger were instantly killed. The other men parachuted to safety.

One crew, that of Lt. J. Lundquist, was lost over Wiesbaden on the 10th. . . . On the gray morning of

November 20, another non-combat tragedy took place as the weather ship piloted by Capt. C. Mylius Jr., exploded after take-off, killing the crew.

The 3rd Army, which had been fighting before Metz, broke through on a 20-mile front, and men pushed through the fields of mud and land mines.

On November 16, 38 aircraft of the Hundredth took off for a mission at 0742 hours. The U. S. 1st Army was ready to attack and break through the last vestiges of the Siegfried Line. The goal was the Rhine, and the 3rd Bombardment Division was chosen for the saturation bombing of field guns, strong points and troop concentrations that were barring the roads to Duren and Cologne.

Maj. S. Barr and Capt. J. Seamans led "A" Squadron, Maj. D. Lyster and Lt. J. Trapnell led the "B," and Maj. H. Cruver and Lt. D. Jones led the "C" Squadron.

Fog hung over England and the Continent. There was an 8/10 cloud cover at the target, and Pathfinder technique was called for. Lts. E. Frye, Kretow and S. Rhode were at the mickey sets, and bombs were released on the enemy installations ten miles northeast of Aachen.

As the bombing ceased, the ground forces launched their attack, and all along the line, from the British and Canadians to the borders of Switzerland, Allied arms were borne forward.

The weather closed in and held the planes on the ground. The next completed mission went back to Merseburg. No planes were lost, but on the final day of the month, another Merseburg job was flown, and this time, the old jinx was working again.

Lt. V. Anderson caught the full effect of a flak puff and his plane went down in a tight spin. Observers saw it crash and explode among a large group of smoke stacks.

Bad weather kept adding discordant notes, and the rain filled the creeks, static pools and ditches. The hollows in the fields became miniature lakes, and the ships sat in their dispersal points and dripped away the days, as the men sparingly fed the coke ration to the hungry Nissen stoves.

During these long nights, intrepid hunters of the Hundredth set forth with ingeniously designed traps, carbines and flashlights on midnight food requisitioning. Wild life teemed in the woods and fields and hedges surrounding the base, as well as on the base itself. It may not have been entirely within the pale of legality to disturb the royal pheasants and rabbits, but they sure tasted better than cold slabs of corned beef or beans. . . .

The pressure on the fronts was kept up along the borders of Western Germany as the Red Army advanced in the east. The Germans fought savagely for their ground and what was to have been victory by Christmas looked distant. It would be victory . . . but a hard-won, bitterly contested victory. Prospects of an early date seemed as shrivelled and remote as the drab countryside of East Anglia as the bleak December came inching in.

As mist and fog covered England and the lowlands, vast numbers of troops were being moved. The Nazi war machine girded itself for a final, supreme effort, and Field Marshal Karl von Runstedt carefully shifted his men and armor to the Ardennes Forest.

On the 16th of December, 1944, the Germans let loose with artillery. Their patrols began to advance against the thinly-held American lines. The German meteorologists had done their work well and chosen a week when Allied air power could not operate.

The Americans bent and gave, and the gray ghosts of the Wehrmacht poured through a 60-mile gap. There was death and pain in the fog of battle, as the 75-Ton Tigers loomed up and broke through. There was also heroism and self-sacrifice in the fog.

As the Germans pushed on toward the 1st Army Headquarters at Spa, emergency calls sent every available man into the line. Since the attack began, only one mission had been completed, when planes hit rail lines at Mainz on the 18th.

"Every available man" meant just that. The bakers and the clerks picked up guns. The medics and the ordnance men picked up guns. So did the quartermaster outfits and the salvage men. They became infantry men in hurry. The men at Monschau held fast. The name Bastogne and Gen. McAuliffe's reply of "Nuts!" to a call for surrender became a synonym for heroism.

On the 24th, the weather finally broke, and the air forces got back into the air. The Hundredth sent up 62 planes in the greatest display of strength since beginning combat operations.

Formations were led by Capt. Neal Scott and Lt. D. Jones . . . by Capt. J. Robinson and Lt. G. Brown . . . by Capt. E. Wooten and Lt. J. DePlanque . . . by Capt. J. Gibbons and Capt. J. Ernst . . . and by Capt. J. Ricker and Lt. F. Craft. . . .

556 men flew against Germany from Thorpe Abbotts as navigators Lts. E. Wilcox, L. Kimball, L. Chappell, J. Krepismann, A. Juhlin and F/O C. Benyunes led the formations. Bombs were dropped by Lts. E. Lockhart, W. Titley, A. Tong, C. Svendsen and T. Barrett with excellent results on the Biblis and

Babenhausen airdromes and on the Kaiserlautern marshalling yards.

No planes were lost, and the following day, the planes returned to Kaiserlautern. Lt. Col. F. Price and Capt. J. Trapnell led the mission, with Capt. C. Gunter and Lt. W. Klinikowski doing the navigation. Lead bombardier Lt. E. Davis picked up a train entering the yard, and followed it closely. Bombs were dropped by Davis, Lts. R. Searle and D. Eden, and a tremendous explosion gave evidence that the train had been loaded with ammunition or V-2 rockets.

The second Christmas at Thorpe Abbotts was a more reflective one. The chapel was well attended, and the old familiar carols were Tannoyed into the clear night and across the face of a silver, cold moon . . . a moon that looked down on the station and on the western front, where the fighting was bitter and the armies locked.

Christmas also saw the opening of the Big Top Club, for the edification of the men ranking from private through buck sergeant.

On December 29, Maj. J. Wallace and Lt. G. Brown led formations of the group to Frankfurt, and the efforts of lead bombardiers Lts. W. Titley, E. Lockhart and T. Barrett put the bombs squarely on the marshalling yards.

One man was killed in action on the 28th, but the fatality was not caused by enemy action. S/Sgt. C. Bodenheimer flew as engineer and top turret gunner with Lt. G. Parsons. While the aircraft was over France, the gunner left his position to aid the pilot and co-pilot with their flak suits. As he climbed from the turret, his glove caught on the switch. The turret spun, pinning Bodenheimer between the turret and the oxygen bottles on the wall, crushing him.

Frantic attempts were made to revive him with emergency oxygen and artificial respiration. The aircraft dropped out of formation to a lower altitude and attempted to land at an emergency field, but the field was closed. All attempts to save Bodenheimer's life failed. . . .

It was the final day of the year 1944, and the group took off on a mission that was fated to rank high in the annals of the "Bloody Hundredth."

The air over Hamburg was filled with flak as the formations approached the target area. It was accurate flak, and it laced into the ships as the bombs were released.

The plane piloted by Lt. F. Henderson was struck on the bomb run, and dropped sharply, crashing into the plane flown by Lt. C. Williams, which was smashed in two. Both aircraft went down in flames. The flak came up and flowered in ususally large bursts. Lt. B. Blackman's plane was struck on Number Two engine, and began to lag behind the formation.

As the planes, led by Maj. C. Martin and Capt. D. Jones approached the Rendezvous Point to form for the return trip, the feared cry of "Fighters!" was heard. . . .

The formations were at 25,000 feet. The escorting P-51's and P-47's had been drawn off to other battles, and the first enemy aircraft seen were two jet jobs that streaked high over the formation. A dog fight could be seen several miles ahead, where the sky was marked by contrails. Then there was no time to look at anything but the gunsight and the enemy.

FW 190's and ME 109's attacked in elements of two, three and four, swooping, rolling and breaking off their attacks 300 yards or more from their targets.

They concentrated on stragglers. Blackman's ship exploded after one attack. . . . Lt. W. Wilson was clipped and lost altitude, disappearing from sight. . . . Lt. W. Mayo reported over VHF that he had lost two engines and might lose a third. He expected to ditch and was last seen over Speikeroog Island. . . .

Gunners of the Hundredth were pounding away from every position. . . . T/Sgt. R. Dunker saw a Kraut pilot bail out as his FW 190 caught fire from an accurate burst. . . . Sgt. R. Jonson fired from the waist position and watched his target blow up. . . . Lts. J. Dye, J. Harbison, Sgts. L. Hebert, P. Hall, R. Levin, R. Wilson, P. Kick and J. Boden destroyed enemy fighters . . . as did S/Sgts. T. Whitacre, F. Crist, G. Griffin, R. Mullaney, J. Nielson and T/Sgts. G. Holland, W. Harris, N. Nance. . . . Gunners teamed up on kills. . . . Sgt. D. Jessel, S/Sgts. E. Blan, G. Weaver and D. Young. . . . T/Sgt. J. Wolos destroyed two planes. . . .

Ships flared up like matches struck against the sky, held there for a brief eternity, then tossed carelessly to earth. . . . Lt. P. Carroll's plane sustained an attack, dived straight down, recovered and headed in a westerly direction. The plane did not return. . . . Lt. J. Morin called at 1250 hours, saying he had two wounded men aboard and would attempt to reach Holland. He had gasoline for one hour flying. . . . Lt. L. Ross' ship went into a tight spin. . . . Lt. C. Webster's plane went down in flames and exploded on the ground. . . . Lt. R. Whitcomb, flying with a composite element, was hit in the right wing. The entire wing began to burn and the ship circled for two minutes under control before spinning down enveloped in flames. . . .

Lt. W. MacNab was leading the "C" Squadron low flight. Lt. G. Rojohn flew behind and high. In the

fierce aerial struggle, both MacNab and his co-pilot, Lt. W. Vaughn, had been wounded. Their ship rose perilously toward Rojohn's, who had moved in after Webster had been downed. A collision seemed unavoidable. . . .

There was a sickening thud as the planes made contact. They shuddered and locked, headed out over the North Sea. The engines of MacNab's lower plane were smoking. Rojohn and his co-pilot, Lt. W. Leek, immediately cut their switches and engines, avoiding a probable explosion.

The situation was something too fantastic for even Hollywood to simulate. The two planes clung together as Rojohn and Leek battled the controls, and by sheer strength, managed to slowly turn the eight-engine monstrosity toward land.

T/Sgt. H. Chadwick bailed out while the planes were still over water, but his chute fortunately did not collapse, and he was washed up on shore. . . . S/Sgt. E. Woodall, also from MacNab's ship, landed in water and managed to reach shore. . . . Chadwick was taken into custody that night, together with navigator J. Berkowitz, bombardier R. Comer and Woodall. . . .

Seven men, T/Sgt. O. Elkin, T/Sgt. E. Neuhaus, Sgt. J. Shirley, S/Sgts. J. Russo, R. Little, F. Chase and Lt. R. Washington bailed out of Rojohn's ship. . . . The fate of Russo, Little and Chase was unknown. . . .

Rojohn and Leek continued to fight the controls, using the engines of the lower aircraft, and rode the grafted birds in for a landing.

There have been amazing stunts pulled in the colorful and courageous history of man's will to fly, from the days of Daedalus and Da Vinci to the days of the brothers Wright and Billy Mitchell, but none more strangely heroic than the day Rojohn and Leek safely crash-landed their two planes pick-a-back on a field in North Germany.

Twelves planes did not return from the Hamburg mission, and the old year was ushered out on a sombre note. This war was supposed to be over by Christmas, but the Luftwaffe had suddenly been resurrected, the Ardennes salient remained to be cleaned up, and the V-1's and V-2's still probed English soil. It was depressing and it was cold.

Coke allotments shrank and the men scraped around the huts for wood. Once in bed, they managed to generate enough heat to last out the night. There were nights when the icy winds poked their fingers down between the blankets and up through the divisions of the biscuits the men slept on. There were nights when men who usually slept under five blankets added a sixth. The water closets in the latrines were frozen solid. . . . It was winter. . . .

On the second day of January, 1945, the ships took off and bombed marshalling yards at Bad Kreuznach without loss. . . . Fulda was paid a visit on the third, and on the fourth, snow added an additional hardship.

The white mantle was picturesque but treacherous. Snow and ice details were on constant call to clear runways and protect men and machines by shoveling sand mixtures over the arteries of the base. Engineering men worked on the frigid hardstands, slipping and sliding along the wings, whipped by the Norfolk winds.

On January 3, 1945, a commendation arrived from Headquarters of 3rd Air Division, by command of Major General E. E. Partridge. . . .

"The 351st Bombardment Squadron (H), is commended for outstanding performance of duty in action against the enemy during the period 31 July to 2 November 1944. During this period, the squadron participated in fifty-two (52) consecutive missions without the loss of a single crew or aircraft. On these operations, more than 400 aircraft were dispatched and only eleven (11) aircraft aborted. Eight hundred and forty-three (843) tons of high explosive and incendiary bombs were dropped on enemy targets which included Venlo, Hamburg, Berlin, Ludwigshaven, Bremen, Magdeburg, Munster, Merseburg; as well as Szolnok, Hungary and the supply mission to Warsaw, Poland. Although many of the aircraft returned from these missions with extensive battle damage, highly efficient maintenance crews expeditiously repaired the crippled bombers and enabled the courageous airmen to resume operations in the shortest possible time. The skill in operational planning and the courage displayed by the combat crews in all attacks have not only insured the high degree of efficiency necessary to establish this record, but have also resulted in a material contribution to the successful prosecution of the war against the enemy.

"This splendid teamwork, courage and devotion to duty displayed by the Officers and men of the 351st Bombardment Squadron reflect the highest credit upon themselves and the United States Army Air Forces."

On the Continent, the squeeze was being applied to the Bulge, and the Nazis fell back slowly in the snow. The men on the base listened to the "wireless"

and watched the maps, learning names like St. Vith and tracing the roads back into the Reich.

On the fifth, the target was Frankfurt, and two additional raids were completed by the tenth. Cologne was on tap for the tenth, and the ships rose into the darkness at 0800 hours. The sky was overcast as they wheeled and climbed and disappeared into the clouds. The morning was filled with the throb of engines.

Suddenly . . . there was a sound as though the floorboards of heaven were being torn up. Then a grinding, descending note climaxed with a heavy, solid crash. Men ran to doors all over the base to see where the plane had fallen. A thick pillar of smoke mushroomed upwards from the area behind station sick quarters.

Someone found a helmet in the field across the road. Others said that they had seen three . . . four parachutes come down to the south of the field. No one was sure. Then someone figured that the ship had crashed near the bomb dump. Or was it too far to the right? No . . . it was the dump. . . .

A healthy explosion settled all arguments. Then the rat-tat of machine-gun fire. . . . A solid explosion put a period to the sentence. It had definitely hit the dump. For the next hour and a half, it proclaimed this news to the countryside. Great clouds of smoke punctuated with phosphorus and steel went rolling up and down the field. Men left in a hurry for the safety of the off-base roads and filed steadily across the snow-covered fields, accompanied by the civilians who lived on the base. Rabbits struck off across the snow in a dead line away from the sounds and fury of the exploding area.

The noise died down at 1130 hours, and the smoke cleared. It began to look as though the fireworks were at an end.

At 1315 hours, there were more explosions. Headquarters began to watch the creep of the fires with some concern. It was headed for the 2000-pounders. If they went . . . Instructions were issued for the closing of all blackout blinds to prevent the shatter of glass. Everyone sat still and waited.

At 1500 hours, the fires were out. Blackout blinds were opened. Wreckage of the plane, which was verified as having been from one of the neighboring bases, was strewn for hundreds of yards. The crews of the Hundredth returned from the mission to listen for once to the ground men's stories of the war. . . .

On January 10, the group visited Cologne. Lt. J. Dodrill, commissioned a first lieutenant pilot at the age of 19, which made him the youngest first pilot in the division, did not return with his crew: Lts. D. Williams, R. Bayer, S/Sgts. D. Pitman, G. Bennett, H. Mitchell, Sgts. M. Warner, G. Joseph and R. Toll.

As the Germans moved back in an orderly manner on the ground, the group visited Derben on the 14th, led by Maj. D. Lyster and Lt. D. Raiford. The lead navigators were Lts. C. Roesel and C. Scott.

At 1230 hours, bandits were announced, and the group was hit by 50 FW 190's and ME 109's. The engagement was brief and sharp, and gunners S/Sgts. W. Dondero, D. Reynolds, H. Lehman, Sgts. V. Maxted, J. Judd and W. Hayes brought down enemy aircraft. No Hundredth ships were lost, and bombardiers Lts. D. Eden and J. Orendorff hit the underground oil storage tanks with excellent results.

These were the days when the men of the ground forces went about their tasks with a new greeting. . . . "Whattya hear from Lear?"

Gen. Ben Lear had been newly appointed to the ETO, and the men connected the appointment to the announcement that replacements for the Queen of Battles would be gleaned from the air forces ground personnel. This was something to be reckoned with. Some men volunteered. Others waited and wondered, and on the 20th of the month, the first of the infantry shipments left the base.

There was a mission to Mannheim on the 21st, and then the weather had a field day. For seven days, the ships sat on their tires as snow, sleet and rain alternated and filled the static pools, which spread into the roads. Everything leaked and all of nature enjoyed a wild and wet spree.

It let up on the 28th, and the group went out to hit a bridge at Duisberg. Neal Scott and Raiford led this attack, and bombardiers Eden, Titley and Searle came through. . . . The following day, Maj. H. Cruver and Capt. G. Brown led to Kassel. The weather was still extremely bad, and many of the groups aloft turned back. Others were forced to hit targets of opportunity.

Despite the fact that all the radar equipment on the three lead ships of the Hundredth became inoperative, navigators Lts. C. Roesel and J. Krepismann continued on to the primary target. After the mission, they noted on their report that "Navigation results do not seem too good. . . ." Later, the Hundredth was commended as being the only group in the entire Eighth Air Force to hit the primary target that day. The navigators report was subject to great discount. . . .

A near-tragedy was averted on the last day of the

month, as a bomb-laden aircraft roared low across the perimeter in the og, vainly seeking the runway. One wing dipped and carried off an engineering tent. The plane crashed and licks of flame began to consume it. Crew members leaped from the plane.

"Those RDX bombs are liable to go off quick!" someone said.

The pilot, Lt. W. Appleton, was jammed in and unable to free himself. The co-pilot, D. McKeen and the engineer, E. Ryan, were vainly trying to extricate him. The large navigator, L. Duncan, put his weight to the task and Appleton was quickly removed. Speed was the moving factor and the area was quickly cleared just as the plane exploded. No lives were lost.

As the month bowed out, the weather slowed up somewhat. The Germans had lost their great gamble. The bulge had all but been erased. The Red Army was approaching the Oder River and the war was looking up. Roosevelt, Stalin and Churchill met in the Black Sea as the first month of 1945 passed into the history books. . . .

February began inauspiciously. There was no mission on the first. Berlin was the scheduled target on the second, but the mission was scrubbed. There was a cold tang in the air and plenty of overcast over Eastern England. There was an air of finality about the news. It seemed to be the home stretch, and Allied arms all over the globe girded for the pay-off push.

Hopes rose at Thorpe Abbotts. The handwriting on the Nazi wall of conquest began to etch a little deeper, and the experts of the gas death trains, the heroes of the Dachau crematoriums and the mastermen of Lidice began to quake in their ersatz boots.

Religion

Capt. A. M. Phillips

Capt. C. J. Hinkley

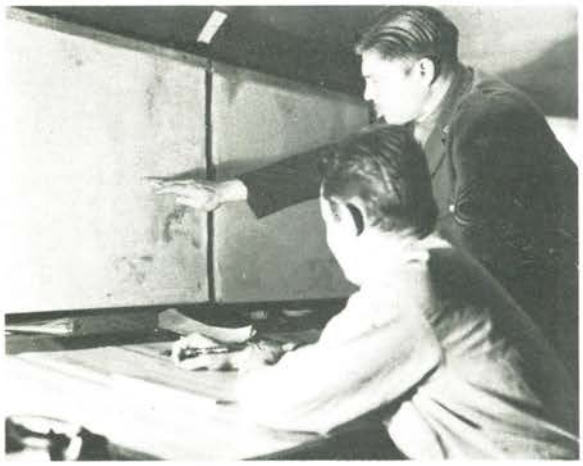
Capt. G. F. Teska

Chaplain Phillips aids reunion of Pfc. B. Will, 2nd Div., with brother T/5 Sgt. G. Will, flying with 100th.

L. to R.: Sgt. R. G. Weninger, Capt. G. F. Teska, S Sgt. H. E. Christensen.

18th WEATHER DETACHMENT

L. to R. Front: M/Sgt. J. Oberg, Lt. E. Pike, Capt. R. Becker, Lt. F. Orenstein, M/Sgt. T. Smith. L. to R. Rear: Sgt. M. Harris, Cpl. W. Kittay, S/Sgt. R. Rowan, Sgt. C. Eastwood, Sgt. K. Beacom, Cpl. H. Barksdale.



Recording Weather Data

Wind Velocity Check

Barometer Reading

Barograph Reading


S.3
TRAINING

STATION TRAINING

Capt. Robert M. Burns

Major Everett E. Blakely

Lt. Col. Robert Rosenthal

Major Neal P. Scott

Lt. Col. Sam L. Barr

Lt. Col. Robert W. Stivers

Major Johnston R. Staples

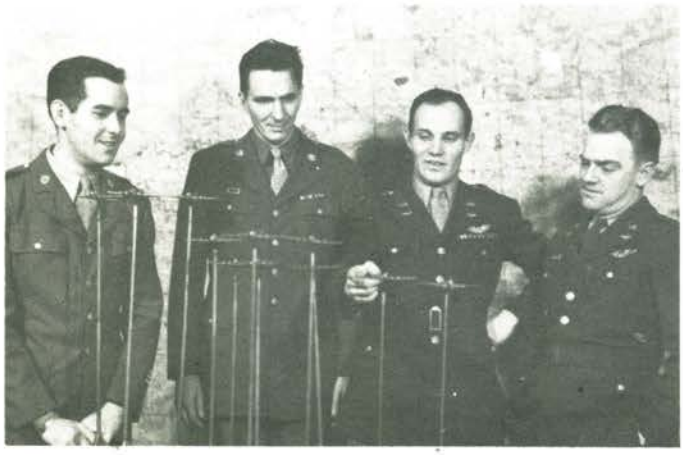
To the Station Training office fell the task of teaching the new crews some of the ropes of aerial combat, ETO style. As the incipient airmen deposited their bags at Thorpe Abbotts, they were launched upon a full schedule of ground training. There were lectures and bull sessions and more lectures, with films loading down a large section of the agenda.

Nothing was left to chance as the crews were schooled. The men were taught oxygen discipline and parachute drill, as well as methods and procedures for abandoning aircraft after hitting water . . . the procedure known simply as "ditching."

Before the men of the crew took to the air, the bombardiers worked out on the bomb trainer, the navigators plotted the course of the stars, while the gunners sharpened their eyes on targets in the blister hangar.

With Colonel Jeffrey's arrival on the base, great emphasis was placed on lead crew training, and the men who were to lead the large formations across the battlegrounds of Europe received comprehensive instruction and review by seasoned lead personnel.

Station Training, in all its functions and units, played an important role in preparing the airmen for their tremendous tasks in the skies over the ETO.



S/Sgt. Archie Abney, Sgt. Frank Linderoth, Maj. E. Blakely, Lt. James Cathey.

Training Lecture Room

GUNNERY

Major R. Cohen

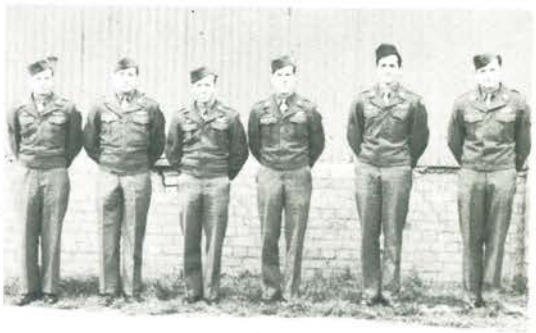
Capt. R. Berry

Lt. R. McAtee

Lt. W. Anderson

Capt. E. Muttersback

L. to R.: P. Halde, H. Fearnow, B. Dobson, R. Taylor, M. Campbell. 351st Instructors.



L. to R.: J. Johnson, J. Hale, J. Andrews, R. Stoner, P. Buchanan, E. Gunderson. 350th Instructors.

L. to R.: Fallick, C. Merrill, J. Hood, E. Allen, R. MacIntyre, B. Bleisch, J. Scope. 349th Instructors.

L. to R.: L. Elijah, G. Forbes, C. Tipton, R. Dawson, S. Temple, R. Hamilton. 418th Instructors.

Lt. W. Sweeney

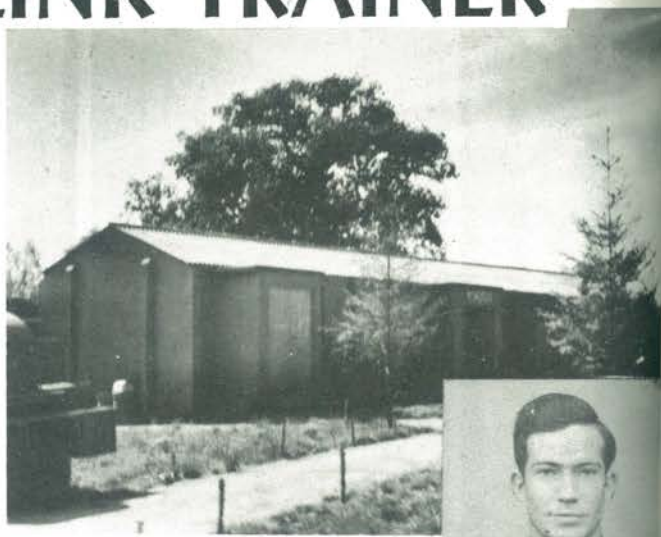
COMBAT GUNNERY INSTRUCTORS

BALL TURRET INSTRUCTION

MOVIES—SIMULATED COMBAT

CHIN TURRET INSTRUCTION

LINK TRAINER

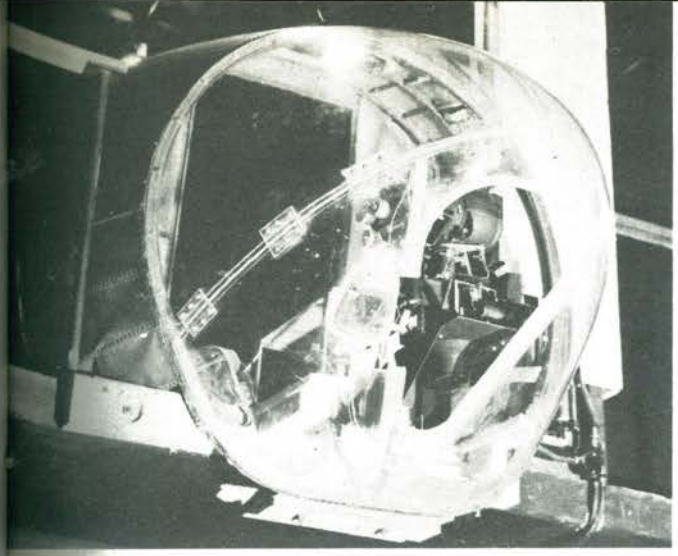


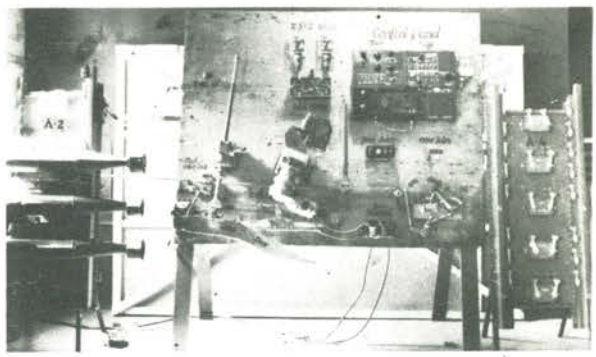
Lt. Jack P. Glenn
Link Trainer Officer

L. to R.: G. Nichols, A. Parchman, F. Polach, H. Young, L. Jones, R. Pickens.

BLIND FLYING INSTRUCTION

BOMB TRAINER





L. to R.: A. Porroni, W. Folk, P. Carbone, S. Lima.

LEAD CREW

L. to R.: Capt. C. E. Bateman, Capt. B. S. Fox, Capt. J. D. Carpenter, Capt. A. F. Dunlap, Sgt. Kaden.

Flight Planning. L. to R. Back: Capt. P. Spurgeon, Lt. A. Jacobson, Capt. A. Dunlap, Capt. J. Ernst. Foreground: Capt. B. Fox, Capt. J. Carpenter.

Maj. C. L. Hosford

Capt. G. D. Allen

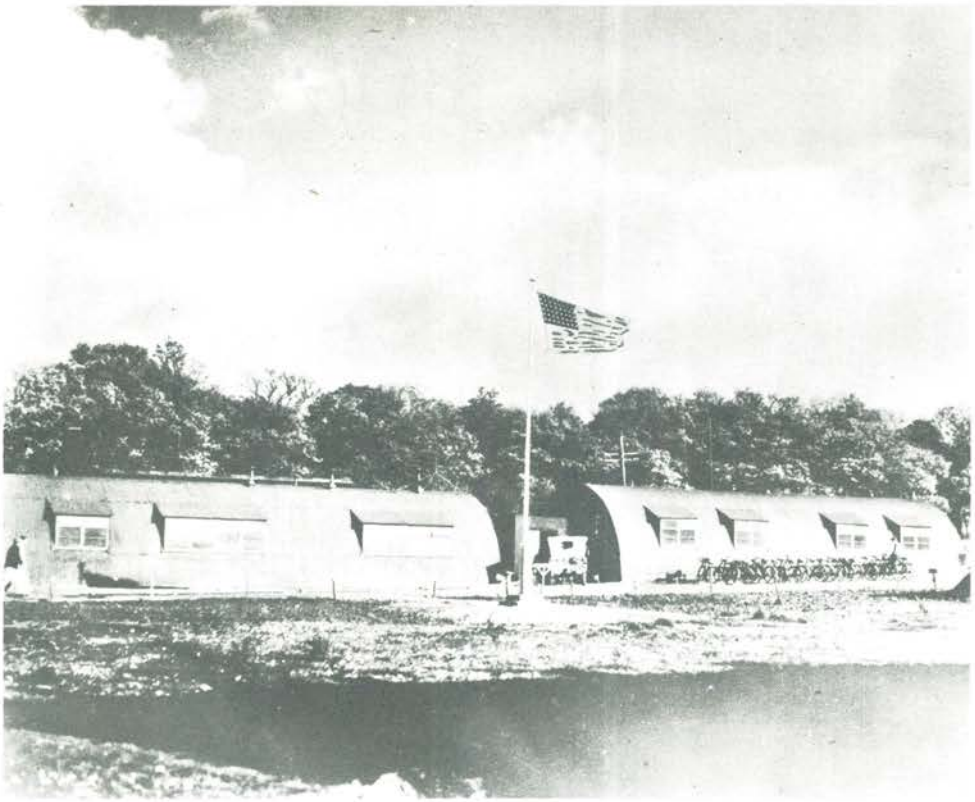
W/O R. DeLong

Lt. W. G. Burke

Capt. S. S. Kaplan

Lt. C. A. Wilson

Lt. Col. P. Bouchard



HEADQUARTERS

Maj. R. D. McLain

Lt. R. W. Marsh

Capt. C. J. Ribar

Capt. F. E. Callinan

M/Sgt. C. H. Hamilton

S/Sgt. J. C. Spence

M/Sgt. J. A. Roskoff

Payroll, Soldier's Deposits, L. to R. Rear: T/Sgt. E. Smith, S/Sgt. R. Welsh, Sgt. M. Vespole. L. to R. Front: Sgt. Pirog, S/Sgt. A. DeGennaro.

Lt. W. J. Wallrich, Group Historian

T/Sgt. P. Blackmer, Combat Records.

Classification. L. to R.: S/Sgt. W. Sharp, Pvt. J. Droz, Cpl. C. Stokes.

Service Records.
L. to R.: Sgt. J. Vassar, S/Sgt. C. Fiala, S/Sgt. C. LaBarge.

T/Sgt. G. Rogers

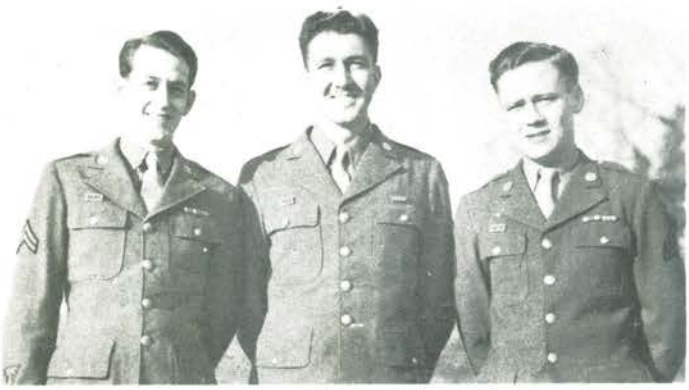
S/Sgt. L. Wolfkiel

Courts and Boards

Old S-1 Quarters

Payroll and Awards.
L. to R.: Sgt. R. Raillard, S/Sgt. G. Downs

ADMINISTRATION PAY ROLLS SOLDIERS DEPOSITS COURTS & BOARD



Services of Supply. L. to R.: Cpl. W. Iser, Cpl. G. Allen, Sgt. W. Morris.

Cpl. W. Campbell Mimeograph

L. to R. Rear: Sgt. J. DiMartino, S/Sgt. B. Wood, S/Sgt. C. Fiala, S/Sgt. A. DeGennaro. L. to R. Front: S/Sgt. C. Truslow, S/Sgt. O. Booker. Sgt. J. Vassar, Sgt. M. Vespole.

Sgt. M. Conroy Mail Clerk

T/Sgt. H. Thompson Chief Clerk, S-1

S/Sgt. J. Winblad Asst. to Ground Exec.

S/Sgt. M. Spangler Distribution

TRANSPORTATION

AND MEDIUM MAINTENANCE

Maj. J. W. Nielson

Capt. R. Murphree

Major C. P. Hewitt

L. to R.: J. Dickenson, A. Jistel, S. Payne, W. Howell, A. Nadalsky, R. Bowen, R. Lawhead, R. Keenan, A. Macierez.

350th Transportation. L. to R.: Payne, Fein, Creighton, Nadvornik, Lively, R. Reed, Haggerty, Davin, Valenta.

351st Transportation. L. to R.: Coonce, Porch, Webb, Atkinson, Wabaunsee, Standifer.

418th Transportation.
Rear L. to R.: Mlkvy, Clark, Ellenburger, Brown, Reed. Front L. to R.: Leras, Barrett, D'Amico.

Lt. B. Stultz

Dispatchers. L. to R. Rear: Engnath, Harris, Moley, Lively. L. to R. Front: Fein, Howell, Creighton.

L. to R. Rear: F. Church, A. Spooler, D. Watson, A. Gabrick, R. Reed, H. Miley. L. to R. Front: R. Bowen, M. Shields, A. Jestel, R. Keenan, W. Wagner.

28th Station Complement. L. to R.: G. Carr, C. Watson, O. Gosser, R. Baze, R. Hurd, Bryan, C. Harris, O. Lilly, R. Agler.

Medium Maintenance. L. to R.: R. Trapp, R. Peters, A. Boyer, J. Thompson, T. Mather, J. McDuffie, J. Wozniak.

Photo Lab

Capt. John E. Schwarz

L. to R. Rear: T/Sgt. N. Miller, Section Chief; Sgt. J. Erskine, Sgt. H. Leaverton S/Sgt. N. Bryant, Cpl. S. Ridgeway, Aerial Photo.; T/Sgt. T. Dailey, Aerial Photo.; T/Sgt. D. Bradley, Aerial Photo.; S/Sgt. G. Covert, Front, Sgt. J. Hibbard, Cpl. V. McNalley, Sgt. I. Gootnick, T/Sgt. R. Machart, Aerial Photo.; S/Sgt. G. Anderson, Sgt. E. Havacker, T/Sgt. P. Gregg.

L. to R. Rear: Cpl. J. Lonzilatto, Sgt. McShea, S/Sgt. Farina, Cpl. J. Morgan, S/Sgt. A. Miller, Cpl. E. MacCollister. L. to R. Front: Pfc. Howard, (Unid.) Capt. J. Schwarz, Pfc. R. Beach, Sgt. E. Brinley.

STATION HOSPITAL

Front, L. to R.: Pfc. E. Frazier, Pfc. H. Clayburn, Unknown, Capt. E. Kinder, Capt. T. Poremski Capt. C. McCarthy, Capt. J. Hardy, Major L. Jennings, Capt. W. Stover, Lt. D. Rodin, Lt. M. Bernberg, Cpl. H. Beckett, Sgt. J. Hessian. Center, L. to R.: Sgt. J. Forrester, Pfc. R. Lee, Cpl. W. Crawley, Sgt. R. Dabbs, Sgt. C. Green, Sgt. R. Baer, Sgt. E. Bantley, S/Sgt. C. Christensen, T/Sgt. J. Erp, S/Sgt. J. Zinkine, S/Sgt. S. Barrett, S/Sgt. R. Dehnbostel, Sgt. L. Hulin, Sgt. R. Compston, Cpl. Jenson, Sgt. D. Gibson. Rear, L. to R.: Sgt. C. Biedrycki, Cpl. J. Wylie, Pfc. G. Smith, Pfc. Dotteveano, Cpl. L. Hancock, Unknown, Pfc. E. Cottrell, Cpl. M. Kreiman, Pfc. Fayssoux, Pfc. B. Fresquez, Cpl. W. Philibert, Sgt. L. Watts, Cpl. Nelson, Sgt. Rogers, Cpl. Dragoon, Pfc. M. Lofton, Pfc. R. Key, Pfc. R. Friske, Pfc. C. Haney, Cpl. G. Wachter.

Major L. S. Jennings
Station Surgeon

Whether at Sick Call attended by the various squadron surgeons, as a patient in the hospital, or seated in that infernal machine, the dentist's chair, men of the base were at all times assured of the best medical and dental attention possible.

The medics were polite but mean men with a hypo. Their aim was deadly at regulation distance. They performed their multitude of tasks with routine vigor, and applied sulpha drugs and penicillin with equal effectiveness.

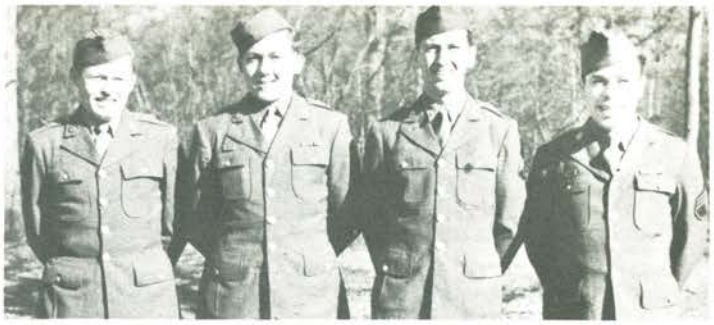
Station Sick Quarters housed the latest examples of medical science, and used them diligently and successfully to preserve the health of Station 139.

Major G. O. Emerson
Station Surgeon

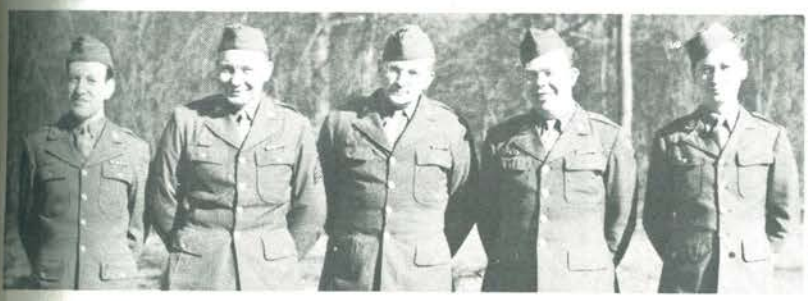
L. to R.: S/Sgt. C. Christensen, T/Sgt. J. Erp, Lt. M. Bernberg.

L. to R.: T/Sgt. L. Hulin, Sgt. E. Bantley, S/Sgt. C. Christensen.

L. to R.: Pfc. L. Klancher, Pfc. C. Haney, Pfc. R. Welch, Pfc. G. Smith.



L. to R.: Sgt. C. Garment, Cpl. R. Pagano, Cpl. M. Kreiman, S/Sgt. J. Zinkine.



L. to R.: Pfc. B. Fresquez, Sgt. C. Green, Sgt. G. Hardy, Pfc. E. Frazier, Pfc. R. Key.

L. to R.: Cpl. J. Cuollo, Cpl. J. Wylie, T/Sgt. J. Erp, S/Sgt. C. Christensen.

SICK CALL

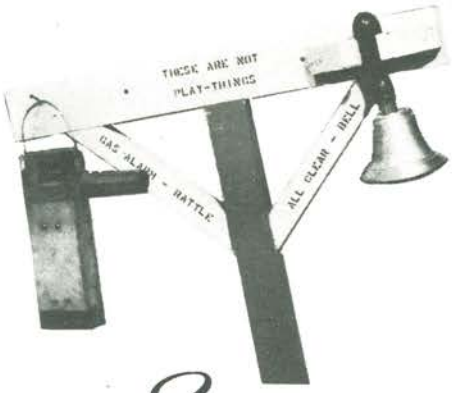
DENTAL SECTION

L. to R.: Capt. I. Goldschein, Capt. N. Dahn, Capt. F. Druse, Capt. Reed.

L. to R.: Sgt. D. Butler, Cpl. E. Randall, Sgt. W. Philibert.

Capt. J. Shriber

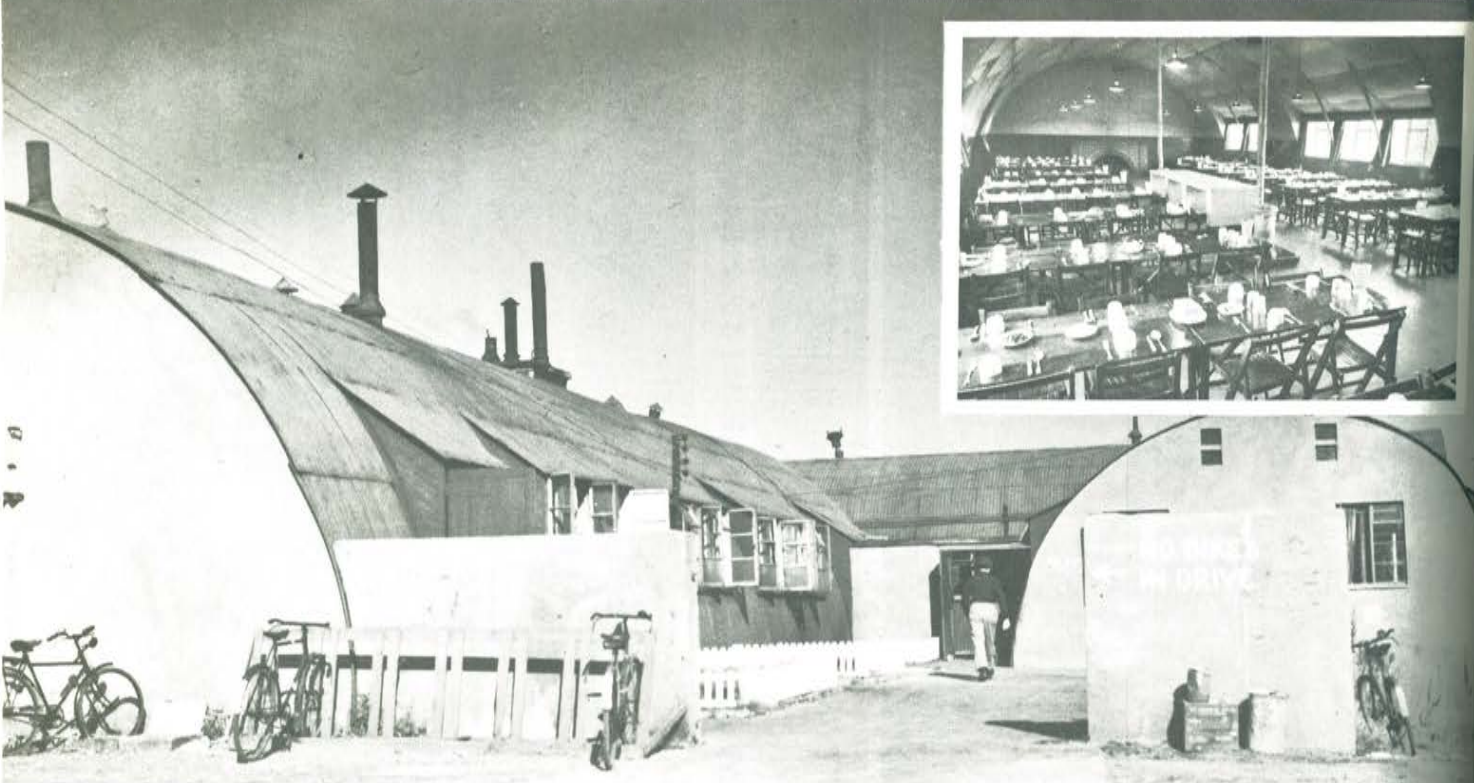
Sgt. H. Spink



Capt. H. L. Hollingsworth
Station Chemical Officer

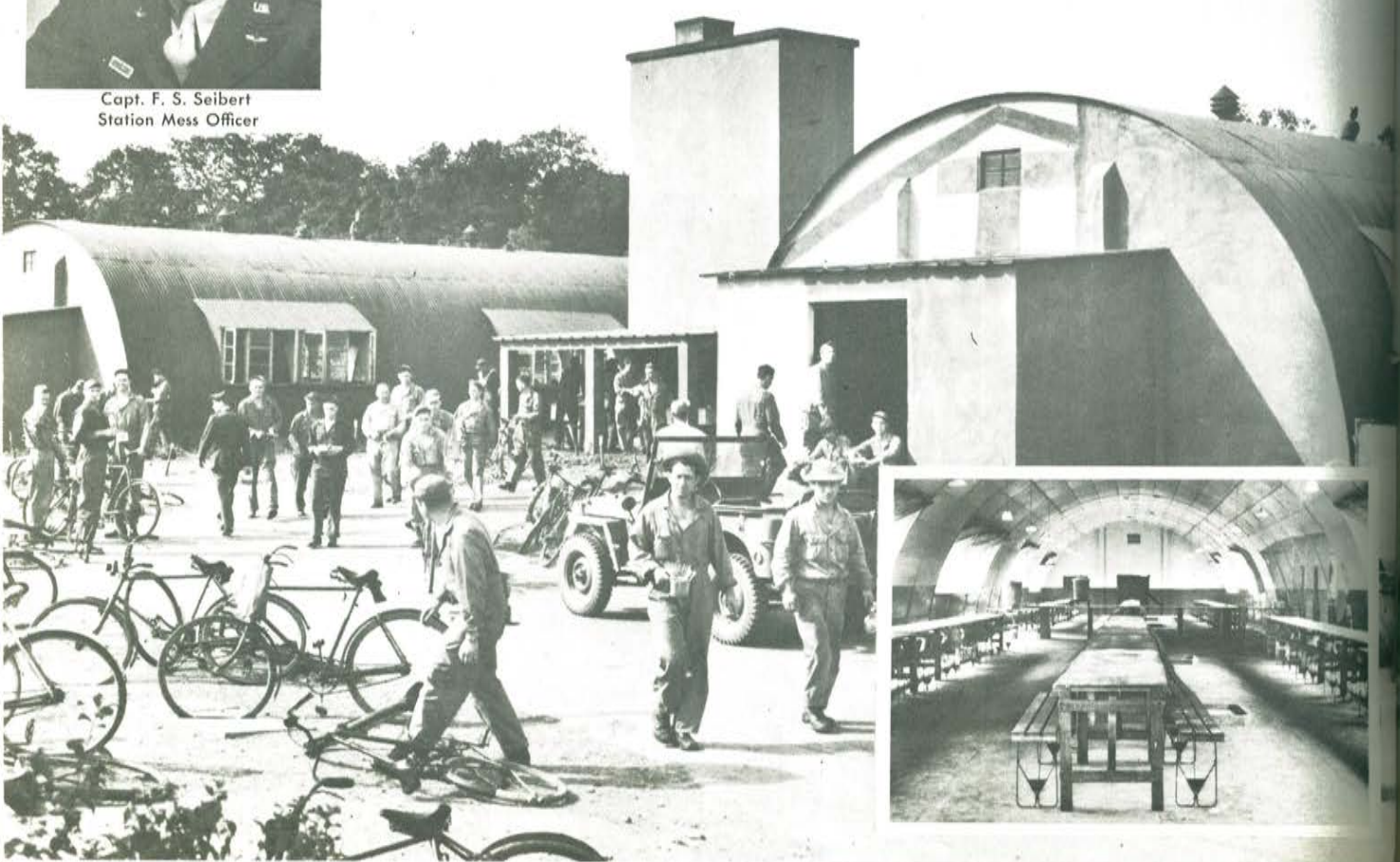
Station Chemical

L. to R.: Cpl. J. Palma, S/Sgt. J. Crookshank, S/Sgt. R. Mathis, Capt. H. L. Hollingsworth, Sgt. L. Strohkirch, Sgt. A. Carlisle, Cpl. E. Reineker.



Station MESSING

Capt. F. S. Seibert
Station Mess Officer



Front Row L. to R.: fc. C. Chalk, Sgt. Weismiller, Pfc. Esccue, Sgt. M. Warnock, S/Sgt. B. Lindle. Rear Row L. to R.: Pvt. P. Genelle, Sgt. B. Downing, Sgt. Huntsinger, Sgt. G. Hammett, Sgt. E. Roseberry, M/Sgt. C. Carroll.

Front Row L. to R.: Pvt. J. Aucherbach, Cpl. I. Ryman, Sgt. J. Greenlee, Sgt. A. Morris, Lt. H. Krinke, Sgt. Chapman, Cpl. N. Nelligan, Pvt. B. Harrington. Rear Row L. to R.: Unid., Pvt. G. Potts, Sgt. J. Cox, Sgt. F. Whitley, Pfc. M. Dancy, Sgt. H. Milway, Cpl. Anderson, Pfc. E. Puckett.

Consolidated Mess Personnel. Rear, L. to R.: Fedor, Kane, Martin, Davis, Meuhr, Mouldan, Weller, Gonzales, Linduff, Wright, Tiojanowski, Garcia, Walker, Andrews, Alexander, Jackson, Daniels, Sorestad, Finkberine, Gilbert, Pereda, Ragon, Bubosa, Eden, Edwards, Young. Front, L. to R.: Camacho, Baldwin, Quattrachi, Humphrey, Quenan, Lt. J. Olson, Ponzio, Zemba, Perkovich, Whitmire, Walters.

Mess Sergeants. L. to R.: M/Sgt. C. Carroll, E. M. Combat; Sgt. A. Morris, Officer's Combat; T/Sgt. J. Quenan, Consolidated Mess; T/Sgt. S. Napiorkowski, Officer's Mess.

Bakers. L. to R.: S/Sgt. T. Cybulski, Pfc. E. Gardner, Cpl. C. Hardin, Cpl. J. Harrington, Sgt. Coogan.

GROUP OPERATIONS

Capt. R. T. Knight

Major W. H. Thompson

Lt. Col. J. B. Wallace

Major R. W. Stivers

Lt. Col. J. B. Kidd

Major J. R. Staples

Major M. F. Youngs

M/Sgt. W. Williams

S/Sgt. J. Spence

T/Sgt. C. F. Davis
Statistical Control

Lt. S. P. Gorski
Duty Officer

Front L. to R.: Lt. Thorkelson, Pfc. Leone, Sgt. Brackley. Rear L. to R.: Sgt. Vieira, Lt. Hellerich, T/Sgt. Maslowski, Capt. Krepismann.

Operations Room

GROUP BOMBARDIERS

Capt. J. R. Douglass

Capt. J. E. Dimel Jr.

Major D. D. Ventriss

Capt. A. J. Tong

Lt. R. M. Smith Jr.

Lt. C. J. Milburn

GROUP NAVIGATORS

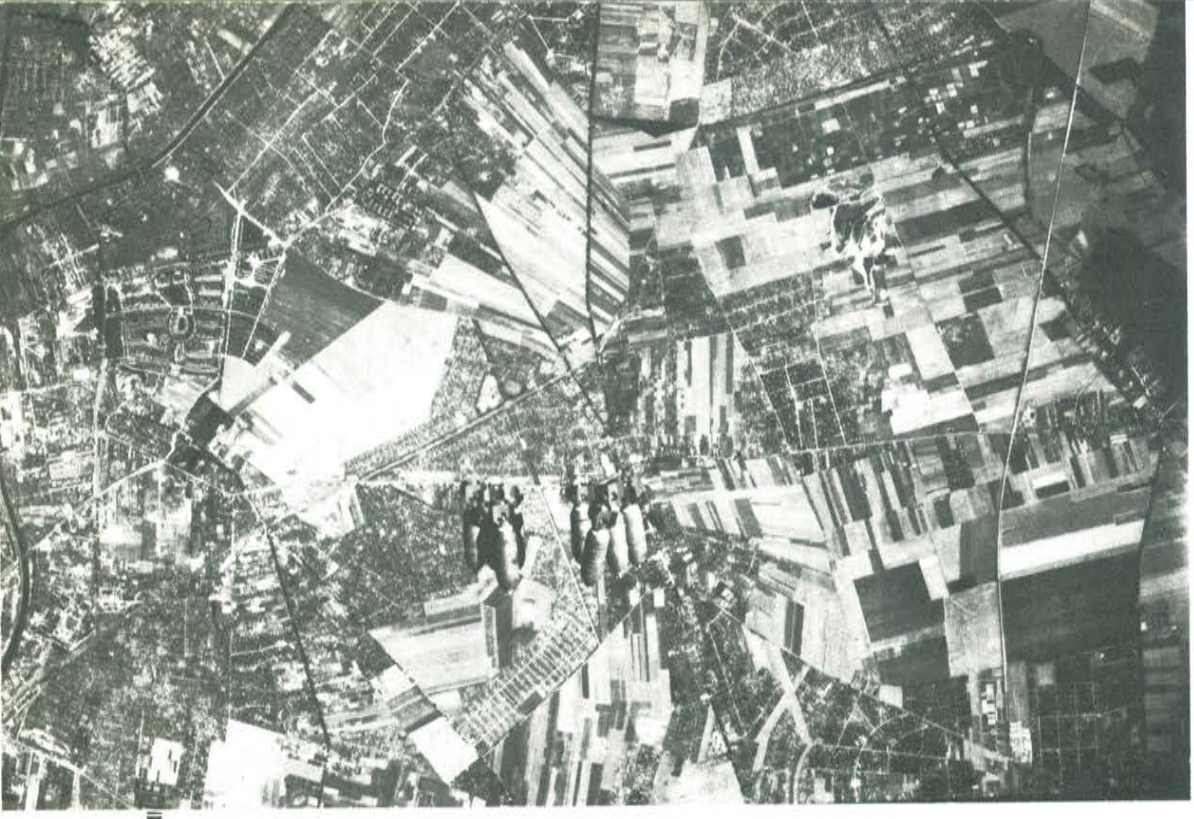
Capt. J. H. Payne

Major H. H. Crosby

Capt. W. J. Dishion Jr.

Capt. E. C. King Jr.

Capt. J. H. Krepismann



The Target is Berlin

THE sun over an air base in England
falls very quickly in winter,
except when it doesn't come out at all . . .
which is most of the time.
The air is heavy with wetness
and cuts through your flight jacket
as though you'd forgotten to wear it.
It's cold and it's damp and you know
that all the bull thrown about the English climate
ain't bull after all.
So what? You live and you bitch.
That's your privilege, mac.

When darkness drops, the Tannoy
barks out over the base,
Giving orders in hoarse, loud-speakered tones,
and the blackout blinds are snapped into place.
The blinds are up at Thorpe Abbotts
and at Eye,
at Tivetshall and Horham.
Cracks of illegal light slant out
in defiance of the now-empty skies.
A hut ignores the call to darkness
and a hurrying CQ on his rounds
bangs the window with a
"Get yer goddam blinds up!"

These are the lazy hours
and the guys inside are quiet.
The curved, half-cans of metal arch about them,
holding them close.
The wet laundry hung near the stove
weeps silently.
Sprawled about the Nissens,
men read Yank and Superman
and "Strange Fruit."
Sprawled about the Nissens,
men bat the breeze about Piccadilly
and Dirty Dick's
and try to fill an inside straight.
And the boys in the Nissens at Thorpe Abbotts
and Horham,
at Eye and at Tivetshall,
ponder the seemingly eternal question:
Will there be a mission tomorrow?

The coke fire in the reluctant stove
(the one with the tortoise of iron on the cover
surrounded by the words "Slow but Sure,")
glows hot and sends a wisp of smoke
out into the soggy night.
Keep close to that stove.
Men have been known to freeze to death
upon moving three feet away.
A million wisps of smoke
drift over a million huts in England,
and the mist creeps in closer
to watch the ponderous activity
of the men who wait.

"Anybody headin' for the show?"
"What's on?"
"Legs Grable."
"A lousy actress."
"Who watches her act?"

Cycles on the watered roads are busy
swishing through permanent puddles
and sending up a thick spray.
They splash by the mess hall and turn in. . . .
First show starts at 1800
and the EM line twists to the road,
the intruding darkness forcing the pocket books
back into pockets.
The officers head for their entrance in the rear,
escaping the outdoors by privilege of rank.
Cycles on the watered roads are busy
heading into the Big Top for a bitters
or a Scotch (at two and six per shot.).
Across the road, late diners spill from mess
as the K. P.'s scrub down the floors.
The clash of the clipper and plates
sounds the ending of another mess hall mission.

Leather boots scuff toward the Sergeant's Club,
and the bar at the Officer's Club on the hill
is filling up.
Amy puts out the sandwiches at the Aero Club
as the fireplaces toss out heat,
and Betty or Hilda or Dorothy or Jane
smiles at the boys.

Outside, cold rods of light poke at the sky,
vainly trying to fathom its depth.
Men look up and wonder
whether the Jerries will be out tonight.
Throughout the base,
The Charge of Quarters settle down
to their all-night vigils. . . .
In the armament huts,
the ordnance huts,
the photo lab . . . headquarters,
squadron operations. . . .
In the Orderly Room,
the CQ writes home, stops to stoke the fire,
stretches, and wonders when the London gal will write.
Will that mission alert ever come through?
Maybe I'd better step over to the mess hall . . .
Better not . . . Oh hell. . . .

It's quiet in Site One.
Nothing definite from operations.
The light outside the door
still winks the blue "Stand-by" notice
to the passing men . . . who curse:
"Two to one we load at three o'clock."
". . . and they'll scrub it before we hit the sack."
"Don't bitch. Transfer."
"You never had it so good."
The talk is punctuated with quick blinks
as flashlights pick out the criss-cross paths
and a man stops at the bulletin board.

Dim lights pick out wavering paths along the roads,
and cycles are returning from off-base journies . . .
returning from sessions with
mild
and bitters
and dart boards
and farmers daughters.
The long trek back to camp
cuts through field, hedge and ditch
large enough to hide a good-sized horse.
(Men have been known to *see* good-sized horses,
of pink and lavender,
neighing from ditches on their return.)
The Kingshead and the Star,
Scole Inn and the Red Lion in Needham,
The Good Pull Inn and the good pubs of Diss
and Burston and Harleston
have closed up shop for the night.

The Tannoy cuts the mist sharply:
"Red Alert! Red Alert!
Extinguish all light! Extinguish all light !"

The men on the roads curse
and move a little faster.
The men in the clubs douse the lights.
The men in the Nissens sit listening.
Some go outside and climb atop
the earth and brick air raid shelters,
peering off into the gloom.

"Maybe they think the Buzz-Bomb can see light."
"Maybe it ain't a Buzz-Bomb. They still got planes."
"It's a lotta crap, if you ask me."
"Shhhh . . . I hear something."

The sound comes out of nothing
and grows to a dull drone,
filling the night with unwelcome throb.
A man shivers slightly.
The exhaust-light of the Thing
breaks through the haze
off to the north . . . and slowly crosses.
"Keep goin', baby, keep goin' "
someone says, and somebody else snickers nervously.
The sound grows loud and hollow,
first like an ancient washing machine
about to throw its last bolt,
then like a plane engine revving in a windy tunnel.
If a human had been at the controls,
it would have been shrugged off . . .
but the robot inevitability of the Thing
struck with a fear of the unknown. . . .
"Boy, London's catching hell tonight."
"That's no lie."
Far off, the Thing strikes earth
with an explosive shudder.
The boy from Iowa looks up:
"Plowed up at least an acre."
. . . "or maybe a couple of kids."

The "All Clear" penetrates each corner
and echoes its news into Site Six.
The Depot boys have finished talking engines
and women and passes,
and are hitting the sack.
A convoy down the road turns at the M.P. shack.
The Liberty Run trucks from Norwich,
receiving a quick flashlight inspection,
(No guests allowed at late hours)
head in with their sleepy loads.
"All out for Sites Four and Six."
The tail gate comes down
and men spill into the darkness.
The next stop and

"Site Three and the WAAF Site."
Men of the 349th and officers from the WAAF Site
disembark. The trucks turn left.
"Sites One and Five" gives the signal
to men of the 351st and 418th.
The trucks turn by the Static Pool
and head for Site Two.
The men straggle along the roads
toward the Orderly Rooms.
You must let the army know that you're back.

"Boy, did I have a time!"
"You shoulda seen the tomato I had. . . ."
"I've seen some o'them. You can have 'em."
"I saw a good show at the Theatre Royal."
"Wonder if an alert's on. . . ."

In Operations, the duty officer yawns
and tosses aside his paper.
The front page is full of the
imminent fall of Berlin.
There is no sleep in Berlin tonight.
Red Army shells tear German walls
free from their foundations.
The duty officer yawns again.
Might as well write home. . . .
"It's just about midnite and I'm on duty again.
Since finishing my 35 missions,
I've been pulling this stuff . . .
Gives me a chance to write, anyhow. . . ."

Outside of Operations,
a door leads into Message Center.
To the right, an Out of Bounds sign
boldly warns.
Behind the sign, the jerky stutter
of the teletype begins . . .
Secrets run along the machine
and drop out onto the yellow sheet,
forming a plan of action in black.
The operator, tolerantly bored,
(there's nothing more boring than secrets)
wishes himself in bed,
but keeps close watch as the machine
unfolds the plan
ordered by Eighth Air Force,
planned by 3rd Division,
executed through 13th Combat Wing
by the individual groups of the wing.
The message is lengthy tonight,
and at stations further along the line,
bases at Eye and at Horham,
at Tivetshall and Medfield,
the teletypes click and whir,
telling their tales to other sleepy operators.
This is Mission No. 255 . . .
This is Field Order 573
for the One Hundredth Bombardment Group
(Heavy.)
It is 24 minutes after midnight.

The duty officer reaches for his phone
and begins to call the long list of numbers
from his sheet.
His words register at ordnance and armament,
communications, the squadrons. . . .
The base tosses off its lethargy
like a giant roused from sleep.
CQ's slam their receivers and start their rounds . . .
"Hey Joe, hit the deck."
A muffled "Huh?"
"Let's go. You've been called out."
Men enter the Orderly Room in ones and twos,
checking to see whether their planes
were among those scrawled on the board
in black crayon.
"Looks like Monty'll be working on his ship all night."
"Damn these early briefings."
". . . Listen. There goes the R.A.F."
The farflung British armadas
straggle singly across the night
and fill the sky with dim, flickering light
and insistent hum.
"Boy, that saturation stuff is a snap."
"My neck! You can have that night flying."
"You can say that again."

In the high, well-lit Operations Room,
a clerk erases marks and substitutes others
on the huge blackboard of the group's air strength,
tabulated by crews and planes
neatly chalked into painted rectangles.
A board of figures is a heartless thing,
and a plane going down
means that a wet cloth
wipes the slate free
for a new crew to be neatly chalked in.

The WAAF Site in dark except for sudden gleams of light which squeeze past hastily drawn blackout curtains. In the darkness, you cannot see the smoke-inscribed target names scrawled on the ceilings of the combat barracks. You canot see the men who will soon be roused to lead formations into action.

A call wakes Bowman, the S-2 chief, Bowers, the flak man, and Arick, photo interpreter. A jeep waits outside. In other areas, other key men are shaken from

bed. The Old Man is awake. So is the Air Exec, as well as the Operations officer.

The S-2 Intelligence building, carefully tucked away into a clump of trees across from Operations, is filled with activity. Movements are intent and purposeful. Flashlights guide ghostly figures along the walk and into the buildings, where they parry the thrusts of the bright light by blinking. Bowman heads down the hallway to the War Room . . . the room of secrets.

If you were perched on a cloud,
looking down at the odd ways of man,
you could see the ever-increasing light flashes
and the deliberate movements
of men in moist darkness.
The impudent sputter of a jeep motor . . .
and twin lights are pushed around the perimeter track.
The deeper power of a refueling truck
noses out the dispersal points
where shadowy bombers stand poised,
gripping concrete with rubber claws.
A thin chain clinks behind the truck,
grounding sharp sparks.

In the squadron areas,
bomb service trucks warm up with a racket,
and wait for their crews.
In the Nissens, men struggle into leather suits,
jackets, boots, meanwhile jockeying for position
alongside the coke-filled stove
(which is usually out by now anyhow,
but men are creatures of habit
and prey to conditioned reflexes).
When a group of men sit around a table
with maps . . . and photos . . . and rows of figures,
they do not think about a man
struggling into a pair of leather pants
on a damp night.
They are intent on sending 1003 bombers
against a marshalling yard deep in the Reich.
1003 bombers means a force of 150,000 men
who struggle into leather pants,
sleep . . . cook . . . fill out forms . . .
pack parachutes . . . are doctors, lawyers,
and ultimately, the pay-off army,
the guys who fly the big ones. . . .
(But the man in the leather pants
is conscious only of a helluva job
that must be done before he can hit the sack again.)

Wright and Johnson of S-2 are busy examining photographs and taking information from the large, well-lit wall map punctured by multi-colored pins, flags, and arrows. As Bowman enters, the yellow sheets of the teletype catch his eye. He studies the order, noting the coded words spotted throughout the numerous paragraphs. Further down the hall, another room houses rack after rack of impressive, thick ledgers. The field order has been decoded, and the men begin the preparation of their parts in the forthcoming briefing. . . . It's a tough target, and the Hundredth is leading. . . . Pens sketch the route . . . Zwalle . . . Drummer Lake . . . Hanover. . . .

The tables are laden with information . . . the product of ingenuity . . . of underground movements . . . of the fleet fighters shooting up the Reich with camera strips. . . .

The rattle of bomb trailers fill the night
with the clatter of impending death.
The bomb revetments empty onto the broad backs
of the four-wheeled carriers,
and ordnance men grunt and push
500 pounders up the beams.
A bomb revetment is a haven for bombs
which is invariably built on a lower level
than the surrounding terrain.
When it rains, the water gets about a foot deep
and it's no fun to play around
with 500 pounders
and slosh through water at the same time.
The trailers fill up.
Goodwin and Hollingsworth call out the number
of the ship to be loaded,
and the bomb truck pulls out with a crew aboard.
(In the morning, Heffernon will tabulate
the number of bombs shipped by air to Germany
and incorporate them into a receipted report.)

The commanding officer enters the War Room. Col. Thomas S. Jeffrey, Jr., is a short, terse command pilot of a visibly determined nature. A young man with a pencil-line mustache, he is a veteran of 27 missions, and knows every trick and all the ropes of aerial warfare over the European continent. Decorated not only by his own, but also by the French and Polish governments, Jeffrey has contributed much to the Allied effort. He has led division and Eighth Air Force formations in long sweeps from St. Silvain at Arad, Roumania, and now, in the early hours of February 3, 1945, he studies the lacquered surface of the wall map. Flak positions are indicated by colored pins, and Jeff's glance alternates between field order and map . . . checking places . . . times.

Being a group commander means staying on the ground most of the time, being more on the administrative and planning end than on the end of execution.

That's the way it works out. Responsibility carries with it the necessity for survival. He smiles wryly and turns to the target. . . .

In the fuze hut, men are busy
setting the M-103's and the M-106's.
Destruction is a scientific accomplishment.—
The instructor at Ordnance School had said:
"A bomb set off on impact don't do as much damage
as a bomb that digs through and blasts up."

Once the fuzes and fins are on the bomb trucks,
they head for the line,
an ever-increasing flow of traffic
clattering over the concrete roads.
The disturbing putt-putt of the C-10 generators
reverberate down the perimeter,
as armorers check bomb racks
and set up stations in the bomb bay.
The guards, carbine slung over shoulder,
hang around and watch.
A generator sputters and dies,
leaving in its wake a duo of cursing armorers,
who check the tank and find it empty.
They hurry to mix oil with octane,
a respiratory mixture to revive lifeless armatures.
Jeeps run up and down the line,
adding to the pulsating beat of this,
the prelude to a mission.
Scattered pieces and phrases
slowly slip into place
like some gigantic jigsaw puzzle,
a puzzle in which failure to solve
means loss of life.

Cables and men strain,
and bombs slowly rise from the trailer,
to be snapped into place on the rack.
As the bomb bay fills,
the photo man shows up
and lifts the floorboard in the radio room
behind the sweating armorers.
He sets the K-21 in the mounts,
pre-sets shutter speed and light opening,
turns on the internal heater
so that the high altitude will not freeze
the shutter into immobility,
and with a sympathetic cluck
at the cranking armorers,
leaves as the oxygen truck pulls up
and takes a pressure check.

"Hey Jack, when's briefing?"
"Four-fifteen."
"Good night! Another early one."
"You wanna sleep this war out?"

In the small room behind the duty officer, the group navigators and bombardiers are busy. Harry Crosby hums to himself as he consults the field order, spins the E6B computor, reads and jots down the data. Another navigator recomputes while a third plots the entire mission on a chart called a "mercator."

Don Ventriss and Cliff Milburn are more interested in bombs and check for proper and effective dropping with grid and computor. Later, the information will be absorbed by a roomful of men. Now it is quiet. There is no air of urgency present. The men work with deliberation, and lengthening lines of figures on charts point out the progress. Pike, the weather man, hands in his report. The observations and predictions gathered by the weather office play a major part in the pre-computation acts of both navigation and bombardment. Times and winds drastically affect aircraft speed and bombing accuracy.

The room is bathed in technical terminology . . . Drift . . . control points . . . bunches . . . fixes . . . intervalometer settings . . . mils. . . . The mission depends on the faithful translation of this terminology into action. . . .

The bomb load is safely tucked
into the arched bomb bay.
A jeep wheels into the hardstand
as ordnance men finish their task
of screwing fuzes into the mouths of bombs.
Lt. Rosenfeld checks the loading
and the ordnance man standing by, says:
"Everything OK, sir?"
"Fine . . . Hope the sky clears, though."
"Yeah. It's just about time for 'em to scrub it."

Time creeps through the mist
and in the squadron areas,
CQ's are busy rousing the engineering men,
men who fix the engines,
change the engines,
curse the engines . . .
the airplane mechanics of the line.
They shiver as the mist crawls under GI blankets
and creeps into their bones.
The flight chief groans and raises his head.
One by one, they leave the sack
and hurry into leather clothing.

The armorers with ships to sweat out,
remain on the line, hoping to catch fifty winks

in the engineering tents
alongside the silent ships.

Through the open door of an office at the end of the Operations Room, Lt. Col. John Wallace, Operations officer, can be seen hunched over his desk. He is deep in conversation with Maj. Robert Rosenthal, C.O. of the 418th Bomb Squadron, who is to lead the formation this morning. Both men have experienced many mornings like this, and discuss formations, crews, bomb load. . . .

The CQ whistles as he enters the combat hut.
"Rise and shine, you war heroes!"
Barracks lights click and sleepy eyes squint, then open wide in sudden realization that this is a mission morning. Some men lie quietly, the only evidence of their all-night vigil being the circle of crumpled butts around their bunks. They had kept time by the chain of glowing cigarette ends throughout the night.
"When I get home, I'm gonna sleep for a solid two weeks. . . ."
". . . and kill the guy that wakes me."
"What time is it? . . . Blimey! I just got in!"
The CQ is flippant to cover his respect:
"Time, gentlemen! Four-fifteen briefing this morning, you guys! The bloody lorries'll be here for chow in ten minutes."

It is 0330 hours on a cold February morning. . . . No time to be out of a warm sack. The airmen of the Hundredth rise with howls and bitches and some laughter. Each man has his small personal routine to thwart the cold and the occasional twinges of fear which run through the back of his mind.

In the squadron areas and the WAAF Site, the pilots . . . the co-pilots . . . navigators . . . bombardiers and toggeliers . . . the engineers and radio men and the other gunners . . . rise with much reluctance. Some of the men head for the ablutions, but a cold-water shave does not appeal to others.

"Well, this makes number thirty for me. . . ."
"When I'm through here, I'm gonna tell the army . . ."
"Yeah, that's what they all say. You're due for the CBI, just like the rest of us."
"Hey! The trucks for chow!"

•

By 0400 hours, the combat mess halls, officer and enlisted alike, are full. The cereal is as tasteless as ever. The hum of conversation and the clatter of plates makes a reassuring and welcome din. The fried eggs (occasionally real ones), or the alternates, French toast or flapjacks, followed by a slug of strong GI coffee, is the usual fare. Men who can take the rough grapefruit juice fill their canteen cups. The enlisted men are following the cafeteria style of service, heaping platefuls of food for themselves.

In the combat officers mess, they grab plates and queue up at the hot stove in the kitchen. The cooks lift the food from the stoves, and with a movement borne of long experience, flip it onto the held-out plates. Men head into the dining hall. . . .

The Chapel stands solemn in the mist.
A sliver of light at the side entrance
pins the darkness back,
and thin flashlight beams
occasionally find the door.
Men pass in and out.
The Chaplain stands in the small sanctuary,
listening to fears and doubts,
misgivings and misdeeds.
The boy will leave soon on his eleventh mission.
He kneels and the Chaplain,
with voice low as the light in the room,
quiets fear and absolves
of intent toward evil.
Spiritualism is strong in the room,
and the gunner . . . leaving,
takes with him some of the essence of this room.
Men pass in and out. . . .

Station 139 has awakened to a mission morning. The clatter in the mess halls, the shuffle along the roads, the beams of light give promise of a slowly widening radius of action. This action is being duplicated over East Anglia at neighboring bases. . . . At Horham, the 95th Bomb Group also stirs. . . . At Eye, the 490th prepares, at Tivetshall and at Watisham, combat men eat powdered eggs in crowded mess halls. . . .

At the control tower, the flying control officer is preparing the taxi and take-off order for the yet-silent and shadowy forms sitting in the scattered dispersal points outside. At briefing time, he will receive the sequence of the take-off, and will plot their first movements with the care and precision of a Toscanini downbeat . . . so many seconds interval . . . a certain position at a certain time. . . .

A corporal enters the main briefing room.
The click of light reveals
the large ceiling-to-wall map,
the map used for touring Germany by air.
The room is cold, and the corporal
shivers slightly as he consults the field order.
He pierces the map with multi-colored pins

along the briefed route.
Then he arms himself with a rool of tape
and begins his assault.
He runs a strip from Thorpe Abbotts
across the Channel into France
and across France,
into Germany and across the face of Germany,
ripping it off after a deep penetration.
He decorates the route with arrows,
pointing out spots along the tape
where the bombers are to meet the fighter escort.

As at previous briefings,
he could see the faces
which would soon fill the empty chairs.
The young faces,
the eager faces,
the scared faces,
the veteran faces,
all looking for the tape that seemed
to stretch endlessly into Germany.

The corporal turns as two figures enter
and busy themselves with the two stoves,
prying loose the ashes of yesterday.
Their efforts are none the less heroic
since the room is fated to be cold
no matter how many stoves are red in heat.
Intelligence men enter and place their charts
strategically around the room.
The corporal has finished his work,
and shields the briefing map
from those who prematurely enter.
He leaves.

Along the hallway outside the briefing room, Sgts. Will Smith, Rubin Kramer and Larry DuPraz are laying out charts, maps and escape kits in the Map Room. They will prepare the navigator's briefing room. Stoves gasp and struggle to preserve some small measure of heat.

Out in the locker room, Air Corps Supply men are preparing the flying officers heated clothing, parachutes, harnesses. . . . Equipment is checked.

A weapons carrier on the road disgorges its load, and the military police post their guards at the key doors.

The crews are arriving, and the officers jump off as the trucks stop, then start again with their lighter load toward the gunner's briefing. Men walk up and others swing up on cycles. The main briefing room is ready and the men drift through the door. . . .

The usual greetings are exchanged. More men arrive. Some of the talk is strained, as is the horseplay. Some of the talk is low . . . some loud. . . .

"So we got us a suite at the Regent Palace. . . ."

"I like their mattresses."

"Listen to that shack-hound."

"Look, boy . . . you don't go to museums either."

The laughter is a little too loud. The chairs fill up. The pilots, navigators, bombardiers take their places. In the front row, a few empty and imposing armchairs gape at the platform, waiting for the coming of the Old Man, his staff and the squadron commanders. A co-pilot in a corner sends out a yawn in protest of the early hour.

The room is almost full. There is a quieter murmur now, and anxious eyes shift to the wall map, where the secret lies hidden. Men are a little jumpy now. Later, when they actually face the situation, they will be calmer. Now, they are tense and filled with the fruits of the mess hall.

Late-comers are arriving. Armament in the person of Capt. Mitchell and engineering in the person of Maj. "Butch" Rovegno enter. Both have been up some time, inspecting bomb loads and completing the preparations for the long haul. Capt. Robert Major, Station Ordnance officer, and Capt. Alfred Iannaccone, communications, also push into the room.

The gunners are sprawled around in the dim-lit hallway. They sit on the floor against the wall and wait for their briefing officer. The hallway is jammed with the men who have finished dressing in the locker room and now wait and talk.

"So the 1st Sergeant comes in early and congratulates us on our barracks," explains a man from Crew No. 50. "Comes the afternoon . . . they slap us on a rock detail for having a lousy-looking barracks!"

"That's T. S., brother!"

"Boy! If that ain't the army!"

There are men from big main streets and men from rural routes in the hallway. There are men who laugh at readers of poetry and men who think poetry. There are men like Sgt. J. Ciaccia, T/Sgt. D. Crozier, Sgt. M. Bogard and Sgt. D. Ingraham, who one month back had written the words of a poet into his diary:

"But I've a rendezvous with Death
At midnight in some flaming town,
When Spring trips north again this year,
And I to my pledged word am true,
I shall not fail that rendezvous."

The hallway, already crowded, bulges as additional crews push their way in. The EM from Crew No. 18, Dineen, Klein, Ryken, Wilson, Torma and

Powell, approach the entrance through a sea of mud. Their boots make squashy, sucking noises as the ooze clings and yields . . . clings and yields. . . .

"Why the hell don't they build a concrete walk across here?"

"This ain't so bad. Why, back where *I* come from . . ."

"We're not interested."

"I think you're getting flakked up."

"Looks who's talking."

The boots sink and rise and the men reach their objective, stand in the doorway and stamp the slime off.

A stir passes through the men as an officer, complete with briefcase, enters and makes for the doorway. The gunnery officer, (Lt. Muttersback or Lt. Anderson or Lt. McAtee), wades through the sea of men, unlocks the door and switches the room into incandescence. The gunners file in after him and drape themselves across the bare benches. They wait for their information.

Back in the main briefing room, Maj. Wallace, Majors Crosby and Ventriss arrive and stand quietly talking in a group near the front of the room. The squadron commanders take their seats. . . . Rosenthal of the 418th, Lyster of the 350th, Robinson of the 349th and Cruver of the 351st have their heads together.

"Which one did you say was Rosie?" a new navigator of the 351st inquires.

"There he is . . . talking to Lyster, who's got the handle-bar mustache."

"Yeah, I see him."

"He's got 51 missions in. I hope the war's over before I get half that many."

There is a sudden movement in the hall and Jeffrey enters the room with the Air Exec, Lt. Col. Price, and a full colonel, a stranger to the room . . . very tall, with a West Point bearing. They stride down the long aisle as the room begins to still.

As an officer pulls away the curtain before the wall map, a complete hush falls over the room. The lights of the large spot lamps expose the lengthy strip of tape stretching from a point inside the confines of Great Britain over to a point deep within Germany. . . . The secret is exposed. . . .

"Berlin!"

"God Damn!" (Just my luck to hit it on my last mission.)

The entire room is a mass of movement and released emotion.

A co-pilot rubs a sweaty palm on his pants leg. "My aching back! Big B!"

In the gunner's briefing room, the reactions are the same. There is no suggestion of adventure. . . . Big B . . . the capital of the Reich, means Big Stuff to these men as it does to men all over the world. There is the usual nervous banter, the usual griping. Some bite their lips, swallow hard, and think of something else.

There is no evidence of any challenge. These men will perform their job . . . and perform it well. Some will perform it magnificently . . . but now, there is banter and whooping it up and quiet as they look at the map and watch the large paper arrows point out where to expect friendly fighters en route to Berlin. . . .

The Old Man faces his men in the main briefing room. It is still, and through the blacked-out windows the nebulous sounds of base movement slip subconsciously into the minds of the men in the room. A door slams. . . . Footsteps are heard in the hallway. . . . A truck roars impatiently outside. . . . The sounds become lost as a voice is heard. . . .

"It's Berlin again this morning. The Russians are fighting close to the suburbs, and can use a little help against German communications and transportation. As you know, we've been inactive for the past five days. Had two missions scrubbed. . . . Bremen and Berlin. Our last mission . . . to Kassel . . . was a good one. . . . Our target today is the heart of Berlin, and our group will lead the entire 3rd Division. Maj. Rosenthal will lead "A" Group of the 13th Combat Wing. The wing will spearhead the division's maximum effort. I want all pilots. . . ."

The pilot is one of these young-old men. His face is youthful, but deep-set eyes and the dark circles around them give evidence of his facing death sixteen times. It leaves a certain imprint, this guiding eight men and 60,000 pounds of plane through a skyful of flak over Merseburg . . . through a squadron of FW 190's spitting 20mm shells over Hamburg. It gives you a certain amount of fatalism, a realization of the minuteness of an individual against the pressure of the times, and yet, paradoxically, also a realization of the importance of an individual (one unit of man acting with other units of man to form *the pressure of the times.)*

The gunners are listening intently to their officer. . . . "Keep those turrets turning at all

times over enemy territory. . . . You will test-fire over the Channel when the pilot gives you the signal. . . . (He points to places on the map) Flak will be encountered here . . . and here. . . ."

Maj. Wallace now steps up on the platform in the main briefing room. . . .

"Our group will begin take-off at 0715 hours. You will start engines at 0650 hours. 0700 hours is taxi time. Col. Jeffrey has told you that we're leading the division. Rosenthal and Ernst will lead in Aircraft No. 379. . . ."

Aircraft No. 379 glints in the semi-darkness. The bored guard is leaning against the bloated left tire. Inside the tent, the armorer catches some shut-eye before the engineering men and crews get out. The mist retreats slightly. Somewhere along the line, a truck wheezes and Sambrailo stirs. The vehicle passes and turns into the hardstand.

The guard gets up. "Halt! Who goes there?"

The driver of the weapons carrier says "Engineering" with a smirk in his voice. (This is kid stuff.)

"Okay," the guard says as two men jump from the rear of the carrier.

Wildrick (the Master) and Shelton (the Buck) bend slightly to clear the entrance of the tent, then switch the light on. Sambrailo rises.

"Want a hand?"

"Let's turn those props through and pre-flight this thing."

The three men leave the tent. The guard is now leaning against the right tire. The men work and pull through number one. Props 2, 3, and 4 are laboriously twisted, and Shelton climbs into the cockpit. Wildrick cocks an eye at the engine as Shelton starts the priming process.

The prop starts convulsively, spins once . . . coughs, continues to move. The cough becomes racking . . . blue flames shoot rearward from the exhaust and the cowling shivers violently as the engine roars to life.

Wildrick signals an OK with upraised thumb as the engine is brought up to a fine pitch and then down to a steady drone. Soon, all four engines sing their song of power, and Aircraft No. 379 quivers in ecstasy, throbbing its message into the very marrow of the men on the hardstand. Up and down the line . . . and on all lines on all bases, answering roars . . . the mating cry of the B-17 . . . welcome the new additions to the symphony of lust. . . .

The outdoor throb lends emphasis to the operations officer: "Lt. Hansen will be Squadron "A" Deputy lead in Aircraft No. 613. Maj. Lyster and Lt. Williams will lead Squadron "B" in Aircraft 400. Lts. Kodas and Mellem are deputies. Wooten and Blanding will lead "C" Squadron in Aircraft No. 209. . . . Keep the formations tight and shift responsibilities in the usual manner if any emergencies arise. Hit the control points on time. . . . Bombing will be done by groups, and second runs are not authorized. All units will stay in bomber stream as deviation has always resulted in fighter attacks. . . ."

You think of funny things sometimes . . . like that bombardier in the second row. Not more than 24 and he has a mission for each year. He thinks of the scornful look the armorer gave him last time when he slipped his bolt studs in wrong and the hydraulic chargers wouldn't charge on his chin turret guns. His mind sharply returns to the present and rivets on the speaker. . . .

". . . and as a last resort target, use any military objective positively identified as being in Germany and ten miles east of the current bomb line. . . . Are there any questions?"

Maj. Bowman has a long pointer and says: "Let's have the slides, please." The room is darkened and an aerial picture is flashed on the wall.

"The target lies on a line between the large open area northwest of the city . . . here . . . and a large airdrome just south of the target . . . here. Flak is expected to be moderate to intense with accurate tracking over this area. The Russians are here . . . in the suburbs . . . and they will see you. Their aircraft recognition signals will be two or three dips of the right wing. . . . At the IP, you will avoid flak here . . . and here . . . if you turn on time. . . ."

The weatherman passes up his poop:

"You have clear weather, visibility four miles at base. 3/10th strato-cumulus, tops 4 to 5,000 becoming 6 to 9/10ths with occasional breaks over the Continent, breaking to nil over the IP and target. . . . Any questions?"

The men get ready to set their watches. . . . "Twenty seconds . . . fifteen . . . ten . . . five . . . two . . . one . . . Hack."

The tension breaks and the main briefing is over. The room gets noisy, and only the pilots remain seated as they await a few words for Jeff. The gunners brief-

ing finished some time ago, and the men clamber aboard the trucks that pull up. A driver races his motor. The air is still misty and moist, and no signs of dawn are apparent.

Navigators are hurrying down the hall to their own briefing, their leather cases jammed with the stuff of flight. They sit at tables and check the pre-computed flight plan scrawled on a large blackboard.

Crosby and King answer questions as the men copy information into their logs. They work fast . . . parallel rules . . . dividers . . . pencils move rapidly across charts. The information worked on by a small group of men in a small, glass-partitioned office through the small hours now becomes common property in a common cause.

Capt. Bowers arrives with his flak information. . . . "Take this down, please. Mark these known flak positions. . . . At the Dutch coast . . . little or none. Along here," pointing to the map, "there are a few guns . . . and you are briefed to turn away and regain your course later at this point. . . ." Pencils rush this information onto the routes.

> Crosby and King return: "You form at Buncher 28, approaching it from the southeast at 0845 hours. . . . Buncher 12 . . . Buncher 9. . . . Start climb at 9,000 feet . . . should be 12,000 feet at Southwold . . . Control Point 1. . . ." Words and figures pour into the flexible molds of receptive minds. There are two enlisted navigators in the room. . . . S/Sgt. G. Holser and S/Sgt. G. Sinclair. Both are accredited navigators, and both have commission recommendations roosting at higher headquarters. . . . "Fireball Able will burn a T-19 yellow flare at the first point of assembly here." . . . Gillison, Chappell, Wild and Bittman, the lead navigators, listen closely. . . .

Trucks of covered-wagon appearance grumble up to the entrance. In the dark, the gunners sit back inside and wait for the remainder of their crew. The radio men clutch their flimsies, which in turn are clutched between two heavy pieces of celluloid, the coded call letters and frequencies lost for the moment in the anonymity of darkness. Flashlights find their way into the trucks, followed by men and equipment. The navigators are still busy and the trucks start off without them, headlights recklessly picking out the jolty way to the perimeter.

The plan handed down through channels now lies in the hands of the air crews. From the first stutter of the teletype at 24 minutes after midnight till now . . . when the men are heading for their planes . . . the entire plan has moved with inevitable finality . . . with the assurance of routine. This routine is identical and complements the showdown efforts of an entire command scattered through England . . . through pasture by grazing cow . . . through winding path and gray-beard town. And the metal monsters, etched hazily against the haystacks, stand in readiness. . . .

The truck with 351st in white paint stencilled on the tailgate, turns into the dispersal point. "Pappy" applies the brakes and eases his bulk from behind the wheel. Crew members are jumping to concrete, dragging their bags after them and leaving the equipment under the Fort's wing. "Pappy" waits till the truck has emptied, then resumes his seat and with a "Good luck, boys," waves and wheels his baby toward the perimeter.

The men head for the tent, bending to escape the flapping piece of canvas that invariably brushes their heads. The armorer sits tinkering with a flexible chute for the tail guns. The two mechanics are rubbing their hands.

"Where the hell do they expect us to find wood around here?"

"Nothing like an octane fire."

"Tell it to the brass. They put the squash on octane fires."

"You just don't appreciate safety rules."

"I appreciate keeping my —— warm."

The crewmen are tramping in and "Good mornings" are exchanged. A slight pall of semi-embarrassment (there is a vaguely uncomfortable feeling between ground and air men immediately prior to a mission) falls over the tent. The air crew overflows the two wooden benches and spills onto the floor boarding.

"Hey! Better give the lieutenant that seat."

The engineer-gunner grins. "Tell the lieutenant he's suckin' wind."

"We'll have that man court-martialled in the morning," the co-pilot laughs.

Men who are to spend an eight-hour day facing death together can relax the rigid rules of caste conduct without relaxing the responsibility of each man to his fellow crew man. It is healthy . . . it is natural . . . it is done. . . .

The pilot is closeted with the crew chief.

"Yeah," the latter drawls. "The No. 3 supercharger'll hold up. We worked on it most of last night."

The pilot nods.

The armorer is yanking the guns from the shelf under the table and sliding them carefully in a row

across the table top. He tosses a heap of red-striped, white cleaning patches alongside the guns.

"Reckon we might as well clean'em," the waist gunner says reluctantly, and the men struggle to their feet and approach the gun table.

The Cal. 50's await their dissection with a stoic calm borne of numerous missions and even more numerous dissections. Lying oily and stripped on a greasy table, they resemble anything but the sudden death they are in the air.

The gunners meticulously wipe the oil from the parts. It does not pay to brush on too much oil when the expected temperature will hit 50 below. They adjust headspace, reassemble the parts and slam the back plate down on the completed effort. The navigator has not arrived from his briefing, and the radio man cleans his guns for him. With the task completed, the men relax once more.

". . . I don't get it," the tail gunner says. "They've got plenty of spare gunners. I come back from London at midnight, and three hours later they shake me outta the sack."

"You're indispensable, boy. This ol' war can't get along without you."

"Three lousy hours sleep," the tail gunner mourns. "Three lousy hours."

Three quick machine-gun shots cut through the morning air. There is sudden movement in the tent as everyone hits the floor and hugs tight. The waist gunner curses volubly. The men stay down until it seems that all danger is gone, then rise quickly.

"Some dumb bastard will always shoot off a gun on the ground."

"That boy's buckin' for a courts-martial."

"They busted some tech a couple of days ago for cuttin' loose on the ground."

"They won't get me like that," the tail gunner says. "I can still be careful . . . even with three hours sleep."

"Whaddya say we get them in?"

"Good idea."

The gunners, grasping two guns each, tramp out to the ship. It looms large in the darkness, a monstrous silver shadow awaiting defensive power. . . . The mist is now lifting, but the cold is still damp.

The Consolidated Mess opens its doors, and cold men trickle in from the line, cursing the weather and the fates for keeping them up most of the night. Guards just coming off-duty park their helmet liners and carbines in a corner and head for food. Anything tastes good on a morning like this. . . .

One by one, the gunners reenter the tents. Here and there, a new gunner finds difficulty with his weapon and yells for an armorer.

A truck pulls up and the navigator jumps off. He He joins the men in the tents as they check clothing, don heated suits, drag flak suits from the large packing crate near the entrance, and finally, just wait. The pilot keeps glancing at his watch.

Outside, the darkness seems even darker than it did three hours ago. Time slips by imperceptibly, but now it is 0645 hours on this day . . . February 3, 1945 . . . and men move from the tents to the ships. They drag their equipment up through the waist door . . . the nose hatch . . . the tail . . . They slam the doors shut. . . .

The planes on the ground are ready,
and one hundred and fifty-two power plants
explode on the hardstands.
Men are ready to pit their training,
wits and luck against the wilting flowers
of the once-haughty, now-harassed Luftwaffe.
Planes are ready to pit their structural magic,
fire power and altitude against Pvt. Kockenlocker,
ace flak-gunner now backed against a crumbling wall
in a Berlin suburb.
The engines retch loudly in the morning air,
then settle and blend with the rumble and hum
of sound along the line.

A mechanic runs behind a plane,
is whipped by prop-wash,
but grabs the wheel-chocks and pulls them free.
The plane shudders and slowly moves
out to the taxi strip.
Another plane moves from another hardstand.
Pilots ease the throttles forward,
and the procession parades before the tower,
from where a stream of instructions hit the planes.
"Clearup to Jackplane L-love.
You are cleared to taxi to Runway 28. Over."
"Jackplane to Clearup. Roger. Thank you."
The flare path men have checked the runway lights,
which gleam their signal of flight.
The procession on the perimeter is a slow one . . .
planes waddle . . . lurch and squeal to frequent stops
in a cacophony of sound.
Then they are all lined up
tight against the start of the runway,
roaring a salute to the base before they leave.
Aircraft No. 379 hesitates,
as Rosenthal and Ernst await the signal.

Men on hospital cots wake to hear
the sound of engines.
Male attendants stalk through Ward Five,
shoving fever-sticks into mouths of the ailing.
"Brother, you're just lying in the lap of luxury."
"You can have it. Just lemme outta here."
"Wonder if my crew's going today."
The room throbs under waves of sound
that beat from metallic, corrugated walls.
The men look up at the curved ceiling,
their thoughts mingling and blending
with the sounds of war.

In the checkered caravan,
Lindbeck raises the Aldis lamp
and aims it at the cockpit of Aircraft No. 379.
Green light catches eyes in the ship
and it starts to lumber down the runway.
Eyes from the sidelines watch the plane
pick up speed.
Off in the distance,
a thin sliver of light wedges into the sky.
The plane lifts its tail,
and the mass of men, metal and explosives
gathers momentum . . .
races by a blur of huts and grass and trees . . .
racing . . . racing . . .
and then a lift twenty feet from the runway edge.
The ship rises laboriously as the second ship
thunders down in its wake,
and the earthbound men squint
to catch the outlines on swift-moving machines.

"There goes 500!"
"There's Gilbert on 805. . . ."
"Hey, Slim! Your old crate goin'?"
"Sure is, can't keep the Beaver down."
"Yeah. . . . Watch for those flapping wings."

The planes speed down . . . rise.
The high squadron lead takes off.
The ships already in the air
cross in scattered formation . . .
some already close in on the leader.
Others struggle to catch up.
Red-Yellow and Red-Red flares
pop from the lead ships
and hang suspended against the deep sky
in shimmering, shifting design,
then quickly die,
leaving a wisp of white smoke
as a brief epitaph.
To a lay observer on the ground,
nothing seems to happen
that warrants this pyrotechnic display . . .
but in the air, planes wheel . . .
prepare for movement by the leader.
In the distance, more planes
wheel and form,
an abstract design that slowly becomes
clear and shapely and real.
They turn to a new course . . .
a start of climb. . . .
The planes head for Buncher 28.

The Consolidated Mess hums and clatters with conversation and dishes. A plate smashes to the floor and the cry of "Rookie!" is hurled at the offender The chow line winds in serpentine coils around the length of the hall and doubles back. Men who have not yet slept eat with men who have yet to work this day. From the line, the grind of engines is heard above the mess hall chatter.

The headquarters clerk is interested. "Where they going today?"

The mechanic shrugs. "Don't know. Topped the tanks, though. Means a long haul."

Cries of "Coffee!" rise to heckle the KP's on the slow-time completion of their appointed rounds, as the urns spurn attempts to squeeze another canteen cupful from their dry interiors. A KP skids from the kitchen with two steaming pailfuls, yelling "Hot stuff!"

Members of the 0729 Club (the mess hall closes at 0730) arrive breathlessly, and bitch bitterly at the bill of fare.

"Lousy powdered eggs again?"
"I shoulda stood in bed."

The chow line moves slowly. Mechanics from the planes in flight, mechanics from Sub-Depot, air inspectors, ordnance men and chemical men, operations clerks, S-2 personnel, radar men . . . take two steps . . . stop . . . take three steps . . . move hesitantly toward the powdered eggs.

An ordnance man grins. "Did you hear about Willie last night? A 500-pounder slipped out of the sling and bounced off his head." "Bad?" "Nah . . . we almost hadda change the bomb. . . ."

A browned-off mechanic: "So the captain says 'Change that wing panel tonight. The plane might go.' So we work all night. And does the plane go? Hell no!"

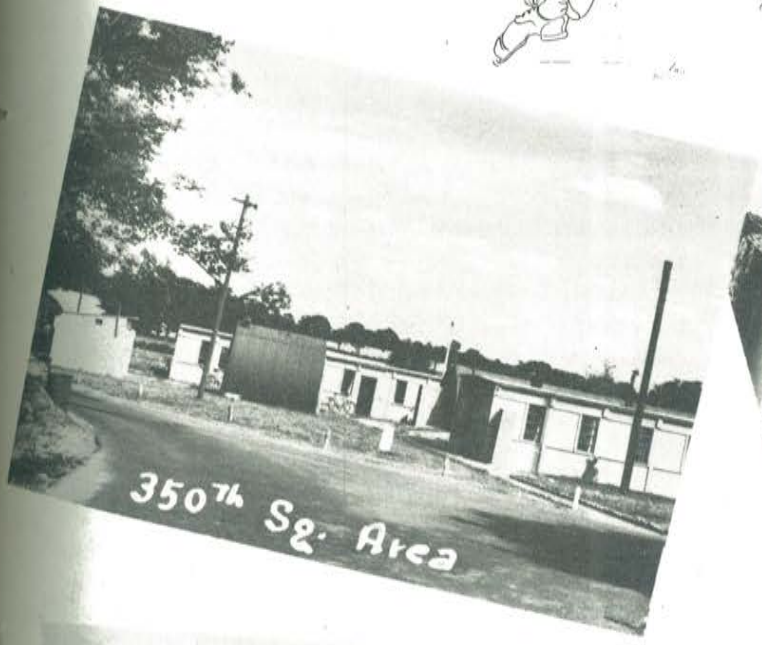
The clatter of the dishes, the steam from the clipper, the genial Quenan supervising, seem timeless. Late-comers at the door are held at bay by an adamant KP:

"Whaddya mean, you can't let us in?"


662nd & 838th Sq. Areas


Rear of Site #6


STOP
STOP


350th Sq. Area


The road from the Mess Hall


WAAF Site


WAAF Site

"Orders."
"My watch says 0725."
"That's tough."

The men argue and the roar of B-17's fills the dawn as it had the night. It gives special meaning to the day, and the men trudging along to their O. D.-collar jobs feel that their routine work of filling forms, handling supply and pounding typewriters has a significance that is part of the scheme of aerial warfare.

Headquarters now comes to life. Stoves are stoked in the Adjutant's office . . . the officers records office. Rank in the person of Lt. Col. Utley arrives, closely followed by Majors Varian and Hosford. Capt. Allen is demolishing an egg crate for firewood, and on the road outside the window, M/Sgt. Hamilton comes up to begin another day of Sergeant-Majoring. Spangler brings distribution into operation. Men arrive at all the offices . . . the hallways fill up and the routine paper war is on. . . .

A Buncher Station means
a truck and a trailer
parked in a field.
The scene is strictly pastoral,
and the cows nearby ignore the intruders
and continue to graze
in bovine contentment.
This is Buncher 28,
Southwold, off the North Sea.
This is an implement,
a vital arm of aerial warfare.
It is quiet, no sound or hum
disturbs the dark cool of morning,
but Buncher 28 is working. . . .

It was 0600 hours
when the Hundredth called.
"Take-off is at 0715 hours.
Turn your station on."
Pfc. Lasker acknowledged the order,
turned a dial,
and a beam flashed into space on a high frequency,
calling "9-G-9" through the skies,
and reaching for the compasses
on Fortresses still to come.
. . . They come at 0727 hours,
dark specks against a lightening sky,
until vague sounds become concerted roar
and specks assume a shape.
The beam, like a rubber band attached,
draws each plane
and Lasker, from the truck,
sees the call of yellow
and green and red arc from the lead ships.
The straggling machines slowly pass
over truck and trailer,
forming compact units of destruction.
The sky above fills with men and planes,
as groups of the 13th Wing
shape briefed patterns at briefed rendezvous.
Every thirty seconds,
beams guide the 390th,
the 95th under Frankowsky,
to search out their friends in the English sky.
There is no talk from earth to sky
and sky to earth is still.
Orders on VHF silence are rigid and unyielding.

The wing forms and climbs to assembly altitude.
The formations are ready at 10,000 feet.
It is 0843 hours and they head south,
two minutes before briefed time.
The concerted roar fades, becomes diffused,
and the shapes are specks once more.
Buncher 28 balls behind
with only a beam left to point out its existence.

At 0852 hours the formations are six miles south of Ipswich. . . . With the planes in the air, the Operations Room assumes a less harried mien, and settles down to a morning and afternoon of routine. Papers and folders and sheaves of papers hold the center of the stage.

Capt. Cosgriff and T/Sgt. Davis prepare their statistical records. Clerks clerk and typists type. The switchboard rings and clacks efficiently at polite intervals. Lt. Gorski hurries with eternal briskness, pausing only to answer wayward queries.

"Any news on the ETA yet?"

Not yet. The Estimated Time of Arrival has not been radioed to the base. Give them time.

Lt. Col. Wallace, refreshed by a few hours sleep, enters accompanied by the tall colonel who had appeared at the briefing this morning. He is Frederick J. Sutterlin, the new Commanding Officer of the base. Col. Jeffrey has been promoted to the staff in Paris as Deputy A-3 of the U. S. Air Forces in Europe. . . . USAFE, formerly USSTAF. Col. Sutterlin will eventually be succeeded by Lt. Col. Wallace as base commander, and Lt. Col. Harry F. Cruver is slated to assume command after Wallace. . . .

The duty officer reaches the society section of a month-old "Pottsville Courier" when Maj. Crosby enters his diminutive office. S/Sgt. Abney checks the training schedule with him. Work and thought moves

in familiar pattern. . . . The flying . . . the bombing . . . the waiting . . . the return . . . all mapped out and documented on sheets of paper. Blank forms await fulfillment. . . .

It is 0920 hours
and the tight formations leave
the irregular fringe of the tight isle
and head across the hidden Channel . . .
hidden except for brief patches of water
which manage to evade the cloud formations.
The aircraft shudder as guns prove their ability
in test-fire against the clouds.
Continental Coast: 0955 hours.
Altitude: 18,000 feet.
The planes pass the Holland coast
north of Amsterdam . . . five minutes late.
Hans Brinker, his silver skates
tarnished by disuse,
listens . . . then clomps down a muddy street
to safety.

The clouds are getting thicker
and thicker and 10/10. . . .
Condensation trails fan out behind the engines
like the result of a sky-writer
doing an ad for graph paper.
The difference is that these men
sell nothing . . . but carry a payload
to drop gratis on a dark ideology.

The gleams of silver are tiny icicles
hanging from vapor chains across the sky.
They stretch for miles
and reach with deadly clasps
for the heart of Germany.
There is coldness and beauty in the sky.
The formations bounce,
wing tips rise and fall
in undulating motion.
Mouths are dry.
Engines drone and lift to 24,000 feet.
Men are alert behind Martian masks
and turrets slowly revolve,
twin barrels peering for bandits.
38 aircraft . . . 351 men
of the One Hundredth Bomb Group
keep vigil, and seek vainly
through humped, solid layers of cloud.

1115 hours, and the lead ship
turns at the Initial Point.
The weather is breaking
and sample swatches of ground are visible.
It is clear up ahead . . .
clear and deadly.
The lead squadron is up over 25,000 feet,
leading the 3rd Division on a ruled line
into the target area.
The target lies under smoke and ground haze,
waiting ominously.

There is a sudden jar felt in the lead ship,
as though a cloud was attempting to push
up into the plane.
Men look and see
mushrooms of dark flak,
and hear the fearful cough-puff
outside the windows
as the projectiles spit pieces at them.
The German gunners compute and aim well.
Metal tears metal . . . and Aircraft 379,
leading the division,
is wounded by a hit that strikes
the Number One gas tank . . . the bomb bay,
tearing and shredding the wiring
leading to the right side of the bay.
The aircraft shudders,
fearful of bursting.
Rosenthal and Ernst continue the bomb run.
The cockpit fills with dense, white smoke
and Rosie opens his window
to clear the choking fumes.
Fire . . . greatest fear in the air,
races through the ship.
The target far below drifts into position
and Lockhart bends over the sight.
Indices meet and bombs on the left drop,
as other bombardiers in other ships
follow the leader.

Monick in Aircraft 500 squeezes his bombs out
and the plane is struck.
The right wing folds against the fuselage
and the aircraft twists over on its back.
The wing tank explodes . . . there is quick fire
and quicker explosion.
One 'chute is seen.

Bombardier Snow on 958 completes his work.
Purdey on 092 releases.
Both aircraft are mortally injured
and thresh in agony.
Number 958 noses over steeply
and falls away in a tight spin,
with two 'chutes floating down.
Number 092 veers off to the right.

The third engine burns and the plane slowly sinks.
All 'chutes leave the plane.

On the lead ship, Rosie calls the deputy,
banks, and leaves the formation.
The fire burns orange and black
against the sky and "Abandon ship!"
means get the hell out, but fast.
Rosie struggled to keep the plane in level flight,
as Weber, Windisch, Stropp, Gillison,
Winters, West and Ernst leaped. . . .

Months later, Dugger C. West, engineer-gunner, was released from a prison camp, and filled out a routine questionnaire form: ". . . Weber reported fire in the bomb bay as airplane filled with smoke. I immediately climbed out of my turret, grabbed fire extinguisher and went into bomb bay. Bombs in right side made it impossible to get to fire. I then went back to the flight deck and put my 'chute on, signalling to the pilot that I was bailing out. The smoke in the ship was getting thicker and I had great difficulty breathing. I remember getting through escape hatch, after that I blacked out. When I regained consciousness, I imagine I was around 10,000 feet, and my 'chute just forward and above me. On hitting the ground, soldiers began firing rifles at me from approximately 200 yards away. I ducked behind a tree that was close by and waved my handkerchief and surrendered to the Wehrmacht that was operating a rocket gun. . . ."

As Aircraft 379 levels out,
the men in the other planes
count the 'chutes white against the ground,
drifting down as though being lowered
by a manipulated sky-hook.
It is difficult to tell of the fear, the sorrow,
not unmixed with a vague and guilty relief,
felt by the men who watch their friends,
the other guy . . . go down.
Hansen's crew feels these things. . . .
So does Meiklejohn's . . . and Gilbert's. . . .

The deputy takes over,
Lyster leading the group
in the turn on the way out.
38 aircraft have attacked Berlin,
and 34 are heading home.
38 men are not returning. . . .

It only takes four men to give the tiny Navigator-Bombardier Room the illusion of harboring a crowd. Maj. "Butch" Rovegno is the fourth man in. The Engineering officer is a swarthy old-timer with a scalp long since parted from its hair. His brisk walk, twinkling eyes, amiable grin and "fifty-mission crush" hat is a base landmark.

"No aborts." He holds up two crossed fingers.

"About time," the chunky Milburn puts in, looking up from a bombardier report. "Had eight the other day, I hear."

"The day we have eight I will personally eat one of your hundred pound bombs. The trouble with you young fellows is. . . ."

"Tell us more, Pop."

"Aaaahh. . . ." Rovegno makes a gesture of mock disgust with his hand. "Not that anyone here would know, but when are the planes due back?"

"ETA isn't in yet."

Men in far-off skies have completed their days work, and planes wheel over the enemy and take headings for home. Crosby drops his pencil and runs a hand through sandy hair, as Gorski pokes his head through the door.

"ETA's at 1530 hours."

Maj. Neal P. Scott was one of the men present. A veteran command pilot with more than forty missions, his talents for speaking plainly had more than once imperilled his promotions. On one historic occasion over Merseburg, he had grossly insulted a general over VHF as the general, leading the wing, discreetly evaded the target due to the intensity of the flak.

"Hope they don't have too many holes today."

"Holes aren't neat," Crosby observes. "I've seen too many of them."

"You and me both," Milburn says. "Especially on that Munster job. I still dream about that one."

"You were flying with Rosie then. . . ."

Milburn nods. "That was a rough one. The Bloody Hundredth was just about wiped out that day."

"You were lucky to get back on that one."

"You're not kidding. Rosie got us back on two engines. We lost twelve out of thirteen that day."

"I remember the one two days before that," Crosby remarks. "I'll never forget the date . . . October 8, 1943 . . . Bremen."

"Say, I've almost forgotten who was on the base then."

"Harding was C.O."

"That's right. Flesher was Air Exec, Dungan was Ground Exec and Standish was Adjutant."

"That seems about ten years ago."

"Kidd was Operations Officer."

"Yes. He flew that Bremen mission with us." Crosby clasps his hands behind his head and leans back in the chair. "We were leading the wing that day.

Maj. Kidd was Air Commander, and Blakely was our pilot. . . ."

Crosby's brow wrinkles in thought. . . . "Things went along pretty well on schedule till we reached the I.P. . . ."

Crosby's minds-eye peers off through the room and through the large operations board and out into vast spaces over enemy territory. He could see the formation reach the I.P. at 1521 hours on that memorable day. Kidd and Blakely led in Aircraft 293. Rosenthal was the Number Two man. Cleven and DeMarco led the high squadron. . . . Murphy trailed. The ground haze was clearing. Crosby's calculations were proving accurate in dead reckoning. All navigational checks, however, were unnecessary. Everyone on the crew knew that the intense black cloud ahead marked the vicinity of the target . . . the town of Bremen. . . .

". . . I was exposed to flak before the Bremen mission, and was never particularly perturbed by the stuff. I remember that in all previous instances, each little burst was a distinct, mean-looking, little black ball. . . ."

It was different that day over Bremen. 21 planes from the Hundredth bore in, followed by the 390th Group and the 95th. The little black balls lost their individuality, and now blended into a huge, angry cloud.

". . . Too late I realized that our combat wing had been briefed to fly at an altitude too similar to that of the previous wing. We sailed right into the middle of that cloud. I could just visualize the gunners on the ground checking back on their computations and sending up volleys using the same data. . . ."

At 1523 hours, their ship was jolted by flak. The ball turret gunner, S/Sgt. Bill McClelland, announced calmly over the intercom that his turret had been struck, but not pierced, by a flak burst. From that time on, the turret operated in a jerky fashion. Thirty seconds before the bombs were dropped, another flak burst struck the nose compartment, shattering the window to the right of the bombardier's head. One fragment struck the bombardier, Lt. James R. Douglass, in the left side. It tore through his clothing and ripped the cloth of his flak suit, but did not touch his skin.

". . . I'm positive that Douglass thought he'd been hit . . . by the expression on his face . . . but he continued to manipulate that bombsight and dropped his bombs accurately at 1525 hours. Our own and PRU photos later showed that he did plenty of damage. . . ."

Seconds later, the Number Four engine was destroyed by flak. The control wires were shattered and the left elevator was ripped to shreds, plunging the aircraft into a spinning dive, completely out of control. Flames were blazing from the stricken engine. The control surfaces were cut and torn. (The 95th Group was later to report that Aircraft 393 was seen to fall into a flat spin, on fire, and that three parachutes were observed to open.)

". . . The normal reactions of Kidd and Blakely should have been to think of personal safety and the safety of the other crew members. But they didn't for a minute forget that they were leading a large formation. As we fell into the dive, Lt. Via, riding the tail, was instructed to signal the Deputy Leader to take over. By this signalling, the remainder of the formation was notified immediately that we'd been hit and were aborting. This act should have prevented any planes being pulled even a few feet out of position into danger from the enemy aircraft buzzing around. However, it was tragic that Cleven and Murphy, the deputy and flight leaders, were also destroyed at this time, and the rest of the Hundredth was forced to tack onto the 390th Group. . . ."

Cleven and DeMarco went down . . . Cleven, who less than two months back had earned a Distinguished Service Cross for his part in the Regensburg raid . . . a decoration he never wore since he never bothered to pick it up in London.

On Cleven's crew, another legendary character . . . S/Sgt. Jerome Ferroggiaro, holder of decorations from the Spanish Loyalist government and the Chinese Republic, a man who seemed to have made it his life work to help the global fight for freedom. Jerry carried a false set of dog-tags into flight, due to the not inconsequential fact that his real name was on the wanted list of the Gestapo since he had disputed Franco's right to clamp a dictatorship on the Spanish people. . . .

Murphy and his crew went down on their 24th mission. . . . Nash and McDonald went down. . . . Gormley and Meadows went down. . . . Becktoft went down. . . .

For 3,000 feet, Capt. Blakely and Maj. Kidd fought to get their aircraft under control.

". . . If I were an expert on stress and strain, or a mechanic, or even a pilot, I could get technical as to

how that plane was ever restored to normal flying altitude. As it is, the whole thing defies description. . . ."

At 19,000 feet the men were hurled to the floor, shaken severely, but when able to look out the windows, were temporarily assured to note that the ground was now in its accustomed place. A hurried consultation was held over interphone to determine a plan for fighting back to England.

". . . The following facts had to be considered: we had lost all communication back of the top turret, so that it was impossible to determine the extent of damage or injury. Our control wires were fraying as far back as the top turret operator could see. Two of the crew members had reported being hit immediately after we left the target. One engine was in such bad condition that bits and finally all of the cowling was blasted off. We were losing altitude so rapidly that any but the shortest way back was beyond contemplation. . . . So we headed across the face of Germany direct for home. . . ."

Aircraft 393 ploughed across Germany with Blakely and Kidd carefully nursing the loss of each precious foot of altitude and flying at 120 miles an hour. The plane was subject to the threat of innumerable attacks from enemy fighters. Other Fortresses, also crippled and alone, straggled through the sky. Ahead of Aircraft 393, a B-17 limped along, helpless in its lonely grandeur. A flight of three Messerschmitts were harassing it, darting in and out but not attacking. Finally, all three swooped in and fired for a long time at the bomber. The bomber did not go down, but neither did any of the fighters. Those three small planes kept attacking and receiving no damage to themselves, till finally, the plane caught fire.

". . . It was with a helpless feeling that we saw our last ally turn over, spin slightly, then burst into a huge ball of flame. Now the victorious Germans turned on us . . . and now comes the reason for the fact that we ever got back. From that point on, there wasn't one single attack made upon us by the Germans that didn't cost them at least one destroyed fighter. . . ."

T/Sgt. Monroe B. Thornton got the first one. The attack came slightly from the right, and he began firing at 800 yards. At about 300 yards, the effect of his bursts began to show. The propellor fell off and the German pilot clawed his way free and jumped.

". . . Thorny got a couple of others too. One of them was an ME 110. It came at us high and from the right side. Another plane was flying with it in a stacked, slightly echeloned position. It was firing at us before Thorny was able to get his sights on either of them. The right engine of the fighter caught fire and pieces flew off the left engine or wing. Two crewmen bailed out and both 'chutes opened. Three minutes later a JU 88 came at us from ten o'clock. I was positive that my shots were hitting the plane at its exposed belly, but it didn't go down. It made no more attacks. . . ."

Back in the tail, waist and radio compartments, the gunners were paying a heavy price for their planes. At target time, Lt. Via had reported that he was hit. That hit was a serious flesh wound in his right leg, but he kept firing at the attacking fighters. Soon after Sgt. Thornton destroyed his first plane, two ME 110's came in after hovering for some time at 1,000 yards. Lt. Via picked out the second one and both the left waist gunner and radio gunner later reported that it disintegrated in mid-air. Sgt. Thornton watched Lt. Via's second plane blow up 500 yards out. Between the first and second kills, Via received another wound when a projectile passed from his hip through his pelvis, severed his sciatic nerve, opened several blood vessels and passed out again. Despite the pain of this injury, Via remained at his position until Aircraft 393 had crossed the enemy coast.

". . . The gunners were good. S/Sgt. Lyle E. Nord was pretty busy scratching flak fragments out of his face, head, neck and clothing, but he still managed to bring down a fighter from a tough position. Two ME 210's came in stacked up from about 600 yards out. Nord took one of them and our left waist gunner the other. It slipped to the right, then blew up. Pieces of the fighter splattered against our plane. . . ."

The waist gunners each destroyed two planes, but paid heavily. S/Sgt. Edward S. Yevich received a compound fracture in his forearm and a deep gash in his leg. S/Sgt. Lester W. Saunders fought a gallant but losing fight and succumbed in a hospital one week later. Yevich had been seared across the back by flak fragments at the target, and so had a grudge against the first fighter that approached from the left side. He got the fighter going away and two crew members saw it explode. Saunders, at the other waist window, had by this time knocked down an ME 210. Almost immediately after Yevich's first went down, a 20mm shell tore through the left waist window and hit Sgt. Saunders, hurling him back against the opposite side

of the plane. He regained his position, and the wounded gunners each knocked down another fighter.

". . . It wasn't till shortly after we crash-landed that I learned why S/Sgt. Bill McClelland had been so quiet. He had destroyed two aircraft with his damaged turret before he himself was hit. The first flak that hit him tore deep into his scalp. He kept at his position and later, another burst scraped his face and made shreds of his oxygen mask, head-set and clothing. When the last volley knocked out his turret, the door was blown clear off. He climbed out into the radio compartment. As we crossed the Dutch coast, another burst of flak hit the flak suit on which he was lying and threw him into a heap. . . ."

During this action, Blakely and Kidd were fighting the controls. The terrain was distinctive and Crosby did not encounter much difficulty staying on the selected course. He tried to use the Gee Box, attempting to get a fix at 8,000 feet over German-Holland, but some sort of projectile came through the floor and shattered the cathode tube. The radio, along with most of the electrical equipment, was long since inoperative.

". . . We crossed Germany and Holland on a line thirty miles north of Ommen and Zwolle. We evaded all known flak areas and large towns. I remember a feeling of futility I experienced once, when explosions burst in and around our compartment. I was so certain that we were safe from flak areas, yet here it was all around us. I yelled out over the interphone for someone to tell me where the flak was coming from. Douglass told me that the explosions were from 20mm shells. I didn't feel any better. . . . I remember another instance when Douglass turned around and looked at me. Two holes appeared on each side of the compartment and cotton batting sifted down as a bullet went between us. I don't remember his looking back at me again. . . ."

The plane reached the Zuider Zee at 1620 hours. Although their predicament was still acute, the water looked good to the men. They turned to a course of 340 degrees in order to avoid known fighter fields and crossed the West Frisian Islands. . . . The coastal batteries were unconsidered factors. At the usual altitude, their effect would have been negligible, but at 7,000 feet and 120 miles per hour, even pop-guns would have been a menace. The Germans threw everything they had at the crippled plane. Tracers from machine guns laced the sky around the ship.

". . . In credit to their gunnery, I can say that we were hit plenty. Our Number Three engine, which had been revolving feebly, gave up the struggle. The whole situation was a series of cracking noises much like the sharp closing of books, as volley after volley hit the target. Blakely and Kidd were risking everything in some last and violent evasive action. We finally got through. . . ."

The men and their plane had survived everything that the Germans had sent up, but a hitherto unaccounted threat began to press upon them. . . . This threat was gravity. . . . The plane was now flying at 3,990 feet and sinking rapidly. Kidd received a heading to the closest part of England. As Crosby checked back on his figures, he glanced at the airspeed indicator. It looked suspiciously immobile. He rapped it with his fist and the needle dropped to zero.

". . . It was then that I learned from a consultation with the pilot that we were making only 120 miles an hour instead of 150 as I had believed. I reworked my figures in a hurry and gave a correction in our heading. I knew that we were a long way from home. . . ."

Ditching seemed the next answer. Douglass went back to make the preparations. Two minutes later, he returned with the news that the crew members were too badly injured to endure the movements that ditching would entail. Moreover, the dinghy compartment was badly ripped up. This was the first news that the men in the front had learned of the severe situation in the rear of the plane. With the ditching angle cancelled, the next out was to lighten the load of the plane. Everything went out the hatches. . . . Guns, ammunition, flying equipment, Gee Box, radio . . . anything detachable and with an ounce of weight went plummetting down. Although the airspeed of the plane still remained at 115-120 miles per hour, (a small number of miles above the stalling speed of the plane), Blakely and Kidd not only managed to keep the plane even, but actually gained 300 feet.

". . . England seemed so far away. The ship was listing in such an attitude that our floating aperiodic compass stuck on the side. I had to figure where the sun should hit the plexi-glass front of the plane and call the pilot to correct him every time the sun moved off. . . . We hit England. By now, our gas problem was serious. We sighted a large airport at Ludham, which seemed occupied, and we prepared for a crash landing. . . ."

The men gathered in the radio compartment. Sgt. Saunders walked unaided to the radio compartment and kept smiling as the men bustled about. No one suspected the extent of his injuries. Sgt. McClelland, noticing the excitement, and in his dazed condition, thought that they were being attacked again, and it proved almost impossible to keep him from getting to his turret. T/Sgt. Edmund G. Forkner was kept busy attending to the patients, had completely stopped the flow of blood from all wounds, disinfected all injuries, and calmed the men with morphine. Although his key had been shot away earlier in the mission, he had still managed to send out distress signals by pounding his finger on his throat mike. The men cushioned themselves as best they could for a landing they knew was going to be rough . . . and it was.

The tail wheel had not come down. The brakes were gone. One elevator was useless. Nothing worked properly at all, and even the hydraulic system failed. The plane hit earth . . . bounced, and the frayed cables of the rudder snapped. From then on, even the pilots were just along for the ride. Two large trees watched as the plane, now completely beyond control, veered toward them. The largest one struck while the plane was traveling at fifty miles an hour. There was a wrench, a crash as the tree hit between the Number Two engine and the pilot's compartment. The aircraft swung around instead of being jerked to a halt.

". . . But we were on the ground, and that almost ends the story . . . except for the fact that we had picked an unused field. The planes on the perimeter were dummies, and medical aid was still two hours away. We fired rockets which were seen from Coltishall, and it wasn't long before some R.A.F. medical officers arrived. Two ambulances also came up and the wounded men loaded on. We were soon under expert medical care at the Norwich and Norfolk General Hospital . . . and that's it. . . ."

The men are brought back to the present by the roar of fighters buzzing the field.

"There go the little friends."

"The planes will be back soon."

"Anybody heading for the line?"

The bull session breaks up. The small room empties.

The men on the line are sweating in the mission. They wait around the engineering tents for the first distant drone. In one tent, the radio gives out with Sinatra and "Nancy" over the A.F.N. The hardstand seems nude without its airborne boarder. Only a wide, dark oil stain tells where the plane once rested. Other hardstands, with planes that did not go today, are busy, and the business of repair and maintenance is a steady one. Airplane mechanics are busy with the metallic embroidery of an engine change. A practice mission sails overhead. Along the perimeter, trucks keep a steady patrol.

The men with planes in the air just wait.

Four low, fast specks appear in the distance and it seems only a second later that four zipping P-51's scoot low over the control tower. Somebody in the tower curses as the zoom quickly fades.

"Can't those guys get any lower than that?"

The "wheels" are arriving at the tower. Col. Sutterlin looks out to the east. Price is seated. The clerks are intent in their work. Biondino and Pound are ready to supervise the landing.

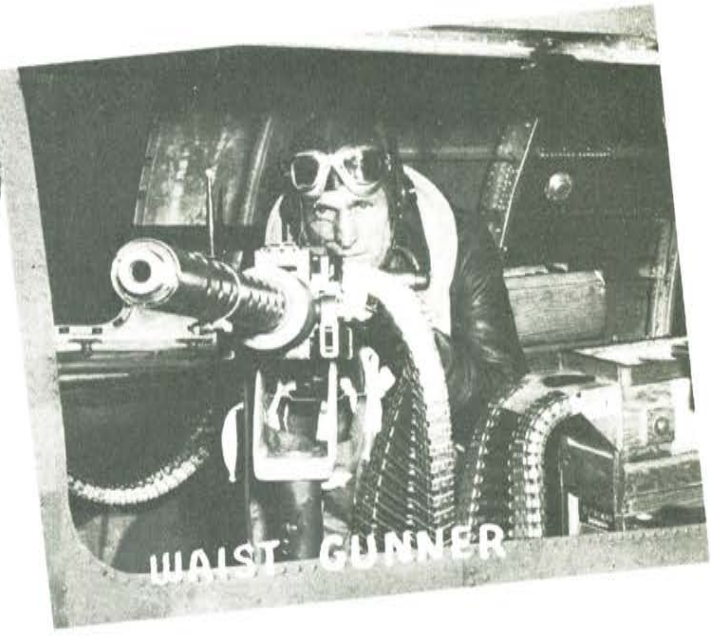
Far off, there is a drone
and eyes peer into distant sky.
Men look at one another . . . nod.
Could be ours.
Black dots grow like fungus on the sky,
spreading, forming patterns.
Louder, beat of engines.
They are ours. "Any missing?"
Planes across the field and men look up
from the hardstands,
from the tower,
from the crash trucks,
from the meat wagons.
The roar of raucous engines blots out speech
and a signal flare from the lead ship
hangs and breaks and dies.
Voices pass from earth to sky,
from sky to earth. . . .

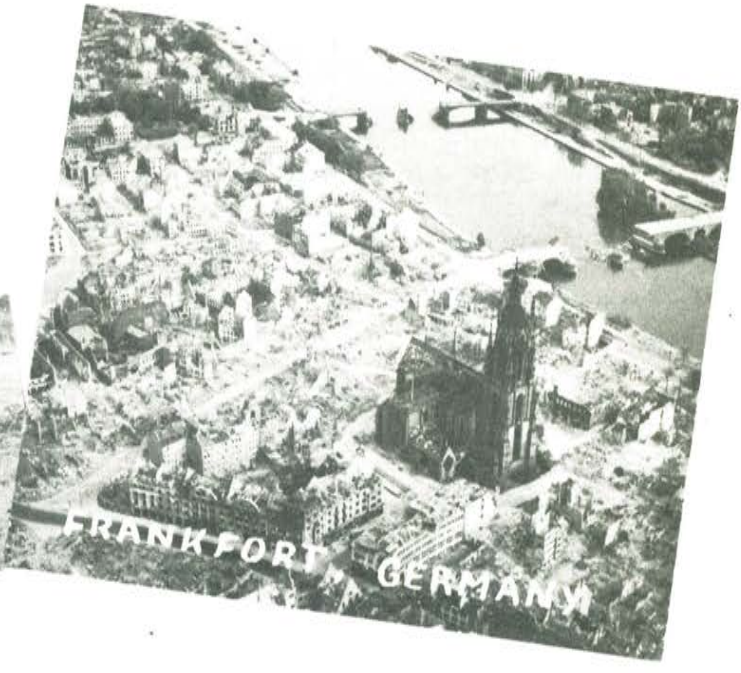
"Shyboy S-sugar to Clearup. . . .
Can you tell me . . . ?
Clearup answering Shyboy S.
You are cleared to come in. Over.
Shyboy S-sugar to Clearup. Thank you."

A squadron peels and lazily breaks formation.
"Looks like we lost some."
Another group comes up the sky at right angles,
low and loud, and there is an odd, fused design,
before they disentangle and pass.
An aircraft fires the red-red flare
of wounded aboard,
and an ambulance races out,
followed by a crash truck.
The Fort hits Runway 28,


HORNY
HEAVEN CAN WAIT
RELUCTANT DRAGON
HUNDRED PROOF
ROYAL FLUSH
HARD LUCK!


LEAD
NAVIGATOR


WAIST GUNNER


FRANKFORT GERMANY


The Brass Hat
LUCKY ASSIE
The Latest Rumor
SKIPPER
Katie
Little Yank's and a Jerk
Fools Rush In
Piccadilly Lily

settles, churns dust and comes in.
"What ship is that?"
"963. Pilot's Johnson."
Sinclair, the enlisted navigator,
hobbles from the plane to the ambulance,
aided by two flight surgeons
who are solicitous of the injured leg
as they assist him into the wagon.

Again, a double flare trails scarlet on blue
and an ambulance heads out.
"Dovel on 632."
Planes on both sides of the perimeter
taxi to their resting places,
two outboard engines pushing exhausted metal.
A plane turns into Dispersal Ten.
Six ground men grunt and guide the plane
backwards into its position.
It rocks slightly as the pilot
applies the brakes.
The waist door opens and weary men emerge,
dragging their bags behind them.
Guns are jerked from their receivers.
A truck turns into the hardstand
and Pappy blows the horn and yells "Let's go!"
They razz and hurriedly clean the guns.
Then they pile on.
"How'd it go today, boys?"
"Rough, Pappy, rough."
The truck heads for interrogations. . . .

Men have been at work redecorating the interior, adding tables, chairs, and forming them into neat little clusters for the various functions of interrogations. Soon the room will be a babel of voices and men, of questions and answers, of bombs and planes. . . . Now, the lull, the calm, the waiting. A few S-2 interrogators arrive, the men who listen and ask questions.

At one of the tables, Red Cross girls prepare the food . . . the inevitable sandwiches of corned beef and powdered eggs . . . grapefruit juice and coffee.

Capt. Hardy, the Flight Surgeon, strolls in with bottles of liquor under each arm. One double shot per returning airman. "Doc" Hardy finds himself and his burden the object of tremendous popularity, but remains unmoved by this display of sudden affection, and keeps both eyes on the bottles.

Even before the crews arrive, the room seems crowded. Well-wishers and curiosity-seekers mill about, exchanging pseudo-scintillating repartee with the girls, who are not displeased to be the center of attraction.

Chaplains Phillips and Teska are present. Clerks are busy setting out the various forms on the various tables. M.P.'s take their positions at the doors to the main briefing room.

Trucks from the hardstands begin to pull up. The crews, dragging their equipment with them, shuffle into the building. The scuffing of heavy gear and boots penetrates the room, where the men waiting cut off speech as the begrimed airmen enter, strain evident on their faces.

Somebody yells out a crew number to a clerk, who checks it off, and the men shuffle on into the large locker room, where they reach for coffee and a sandwich. Capt. Callinan comes up with his perennial query: "Any hot news?"

A navigator nods. "Yes." He checks his log. "I saw a V-2 rocket trail going straight up at . . . 5240N-0645E."

A gunner puts in: "I saw about twelve barges in the canal north of Meppen at 0967 hours."

More airmen spill information. . . . Effective smoke screen observed near Magdeburg. . . . Large vessel appeared to be anchored near 5343N-0723E at 1344 hours. . . . Callinan jots down the news and heads off to relay it to higher headquarters. Later, P-51's, the R. A. F. or Coastal Defense will swarm over the points mentioned briefly by a tired navigator and a grimy waist gunner. . . .

Questions are on everyone's mind, but nobody likes to start off. A pilot breaks the spell with . . . "We lost four."

Somebody else said: "Rosie went down."

Men look up. The reaction is slow, with disbelief the initial reflex. Rosie go down? That was close to impossible. Men who spark a group through more than fifty missions don't go down. Men who become legends don't go down.

The three words seemed to spell the end of a historic part of the story of the Hundredth. Men thought of Munster . . . of "Rosie's Riveters." . . .

"Any chutes?"
"I counted six."
"That flak was rough."
"Flak my foot. Those were ground rockets."
"One got Rosie right on the bomb run."

A clerk from the briefing room enters with a sheet of paper and calls out crew numbers. Hardy doles out the strong stuff. Men tramp in to face the interrogators. Outside, trucks continue to pull up and discharge their loads. The room is filling, and the talk is somewhat more animated. The clerk reenters at intervals to call more crews.

The interrogations room is crowded, noisy, and an air of informality marks the coldly formal reports piling up on the tables. Men sit, stand, speak with pieces of powdered egg in their mouths. . . .

"No enemy aircraft sighted?"

"Not a one."

"How was the flak?"

"Intense . . . pretty accurate tracking."

"We lost four planes, all lead squadron."

Four planes . . . thirty-eight men. . . .
The crew of Rosenthal and the crew of Cotner.
The crew of Beck and the crew of Oldham.
Thirty-eight men down over Berlin . . .
men who should be here now eating sandwiches
and answering questions.
Maybe they're eating Kraut rations.
Maybe not. . . .

Maj. Ventriss presides at the bombardiers' session, as Lt. Lasky reports: "One bomb wouldn't release. We jettisoned it in the Channel later."

Sgt. Williams: "Five bombs failed to release in any fashion, and were jettisoned in the Channel on return."

. . . And 361 General Purpose 500-pounders fell on Berlin into built-up areas of the city. The ugly, massive gates on Unter den Linden shook, fearful of collapse. . . .

Men make comments . . . and bitch:

Lt. Guardino: "When the crew goes on a mission, the 351st enlisted men miss out on their coke rations. . . ."

Capt. Ellison: "On long missions, the high squadron should land first."

Crew No. 20: "Enlisted men need another blanket on beds in the 349th."

As the crews finish, the men straggle from the room. The navigators step to the room across the hall, where Crosby takes their logs.

"I heard about it. Seems impossible. . . ."

"Maybe he made it . . . I sure hope so."

"He was a good guy. . . ."

. . . And the base settles down
to quietness and a little thought.
Chow . . . coffee . . . sacktime. . . .
The mission is flown and reflown
in the huts . . . the Sad Sack . . .
the Officer's Club. . . .
The darkness drops, and once again,
the Tannoy barks out over the base.
The blackout blinds are up
at Thorpe Abbotts and at Eye,
at Framlingham and Tivetshall.
These are the lazy hours,
and men reflect and recapture the recent past.

On the line, men still work,
patching battle-scarred Forts.
Another mission is on tap for morning.

The smoke from the Nissen fires
rise in signal to the sky.
A million wisps of smoke
over a million huts in England,
and the mist begins to creep in
to watch the activities
of the men who wait. . . .